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MY BELIEF

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ANSWERS TO CERTAIN RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES

BY

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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

NEW YORK: CHICAGO: TORONTO

1908

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Bapt. Feb 1, 1909
Pleasant Hill Mar. 17/30

PREFACE

I COULD never bring myself to any admiration of the schoolman's famous formula, *Credo quia impossibile*. Nor does even Principal Forsyth's defence of it quite convince me. When I ask for truth, I resent an epigram or a paradox. Even as a boy I imbibed the spirit of *Olrig Grange*, and separated myself from those who say:

> "*Credo*, that is the door of heaven,
> The more impossible, so much more
> Virtue lies in the *credo* given
> To open the everlasting door."

For my own part I believe only what seems to me certain. I do not believe it because it is impossible, but because it is impossible, with all the evidence before me, to disbelieve it.

There are mysteries which transcend language and defy reasoned description, but these I believe, only because arguments, which do not transcend language or defy reason, shut one up to them. I believe them *as* mysteries; the steps which lead up to them I believe as strong and irrefragable arguments.

By faith, therefore, I mean always a mode of knowledge which alone avails in dealing with the ultimate realities of God, the World, and the Soul.

ROBERT F. HORTON.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	THE DIFFICULTIES STATED	9
II.	IS RELIGION NECESSARY?	32
III.	IS CHRISTIANITY THE BEST RELIGION?	54
IV.	THE CLAIMS OF ROME	77
V.	UNITARIANISM	90
VI.	CAN WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE?	113
VII.	IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IDENTICAL WITH BELIEF IN MIRACLES?	133
VIII.	THE CHANGED UNIVERSE	152
IX.	HOW TO REGARD PRAYER	171
X.	THE AFTER LIFE	190
XI.	THE DIFFICULTY ARISING FROM THE VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS OPINIONS	206
XII.	THE ABSENCE OF A CERTAIN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE	218
XIII.	THE SOCIAL ANARCHY	232
XIV.	THE RETURN TO PAGANISM	247
XV.	THE OLD PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AND SIN	260
XVI.	ATONEMENT	276

I

THE DIFFICULTIES STATED

I PROPOSE to deal with fifteen of the questions which confront the modern mind in the search for religious truth. In comparison with times gone by, and even with times which many of us remember, the questions of to-day are more radical, and wider in their range. No postulates are now granted; no axioms are unassailed. The field in which the seeds of doubt are sown is broad, almost co-extensive with experience. There is need therefore of breadth in the treatment of the problems; the wider questions must be answered before we descend to the details. This aspect of our time is not always appreciated in the lines of defence which are adopted by our religious teachers. The apologist meets a secondary question triumphantly, but does not realise that in the mind of the enquirer there is a previous, a more radical, question, which remains unanswered, in consequence of which the triumphant solution of the minor point is received with coolness and languid indifference.

How incredible it seems that a century ago our fathers were divided into hostile camps, Arminian or Calvinist, over the question whether Christ died for all

or only for the elect! To-day the question will be whether He died for *any*, or even whether He ever lived or died at all. Even a generation ago, thought was agitated on the subject of Eternal Punishment. Were sinners annihilated after death, or punished in eternal flames, or finally restored? How heated was the controversy! The universalists were sure that the Gospel was failing because it was identified with the doctrine of hell fire; the advocates of conditional immortality believed that they had saved Christendom, and opened a new era for missions, by proving that the soul is not immortal, but only lives after death through Christ; while the defenders of the old dogma were confident that the other parties undermined the faith altogether; if they did not believe in the devil, they would not believe in Christ; if there was no eternal hell, there was no eternal life.

How distant and unreal all this seems to us, when the question is whether we live after death at all. For the first time in recorded history a vast body of people definitely disbelieve in immortality. Modern life is increasingly organised, men live and work, without a thought of the hereafter. What was once an axiom, the immortality of the soul, is now a problem, and for many an unsolved problem.

It often seems to me as if the old heaven and earth had vanished away; we have emerged into a new hemisphere, with a different atmosphere and alien stars. Nothing may be assumed; everything must be proved afresh. The fifteen questions, or problems, in a sense, cover the ground; and yet I am quite prepared to learn

that they do not touch the position of many serious enquirers; my whole standpoint may challenge the criticism of some, and raise the violent antagonisms of others. I will therefore bestow some time in stating as clearly and as succinctly as possible, the points which are to be raised, so that the reader may see at a glance whether the book is likely to help him. For let me say at the beginning, the whole object of writing is to help people. It is presumption to think that I can do so! Well, my excuse must be that I gave my life to that task when I left the University. So far as my ability went I have studied the problems, and lived in the life, of my time. And though I have accomplished so little in the eyes of men, I have had evidences, sometimes touching and overwhelming, that my efforts to help have not been in vain. My statement of the problems has been recognised as correct, and my solution of them has been accepted as satisfactory.

Problem I

Is religion needed at all? Or is it a phase through which mankind passed in its infancy, but which we are now outgrowing?

M. Guyau published in France some years ago a book on the non-religion of the future; the clever writer depicted a civilized world from which the idea of God, and worship, and a future life, had disappeared. Everything in France pointed in that direction. Oddly enough towards the end of the book the author's heart misgave him. He was smitten by the dreariness, the

hopelessness, the meaninglessness of a world without religion. Perhaps he remembered his distinguished countryman of the eighteenth century, Voltaire, who, in 1760, prophesied that "before the beginning of the nineteenth century, Christianity will have disappeared from the earth." Still M. Guyau believed, whether he liked it or not, that religion must go, and man in the future would live contentedly without God and without hope in the world.

In Germany the same temper is apparent. Haeckel has not perhaps as much influence in his own country as he has among our enlightened and pure-living working people; but he is one of the few writers who is known throughout the Fatherland, and his denial of God, the Soul, and Immortality, is accepted by the cultured classes at the top, and by the Socialists at the other end of the scale. Germany has little more than an official belief in religion.

Our own country is considered the most religious in the world. Nowhere else is churchgoing so general. And yet, we who live here admit that the vast bulk of the people are indifferent to religion. The upper classes make little pretence of worship, except perhaps in the country, for ancestral or picturesque reasons; they occupy the family pew in order to link themselves with defunct families. To mention religion, except in the ceremonial sense, is a mark of ill-breeding. In society, if anyone spoke of Christ, the delinquent would be marked and avoided. If we look into Booth's account of religious life in London, or Mudie Smith's still more exhaustive enquiry, we observe that already religious

worship is an eccentricity of a minority. Vast districts of the metropolis have not so much religion as the pagan tribes of Nigeria. In that benighted land, Dr. Kumm found a tribe which, knowing nothing of the white man's religion except that there was in it a Sabbath, observed the day of rest in a dumb longing to mingle with the higher faith of which they had heard. But four-fifths of the people of British cities have no such desire or practice. They welcome the weekly holiday; but it has no religious significance for them. They might never have heard of God, or of worship, of the soul, or of heaven.

In view therefore of the facts of Christendom, the question must be faced, and answered, Is religion necessary? Perhaps Guyau and Haeckel, and Mr. Blatchford, and Mr. Robertson are right. Has the time come when mankind should make an effort and be rid once and for ever of God, and the obligations of a spiritual world? May the sensationalist philosophy be said to have triumphed? Is Positivism justified? Do the things of sense furnish a sufficient basis for thought and life? Ought we to proceed to organise human life on this materialistic basis, and to dismiss the thoughts of the divine and the spiritual as a misleading dream?

But supposing we are led by the experience of mankind, and by the recognition of the spiritual factors in human life, to admit that religion is necessary, and that man, so far forth as he is a man, must be religious; and if it follows from this that it is of vital importance to get the best and the truest

religion, the modern mind is immediately confronted by—

Problem 2

The study which proves the necessity of Religion is that of Comparative Religion. The religions of the world, the great positive religions, the nature-religions, the dim superstitions of uncivilized man, are examined side by side. Christianity is one amongst many. We may not assume, as our fathers did, that it is the only religion, while the rest are systems of delusion and even of fraud. We may not even take it for granted that Christianity is the best.

Perhaps there are few persons in Christendom who will adopt deliberately one of the other positive religions. The converts to Mohammedanism might be numbered on the fingers of your hand. Not many English people have yet become Hindus or even Buddhists. But Theosophy puts in a counterclaim to Christianity. And the possibility that Mrs. Besant is the herald of a new dawn, a new Messiah for a Godless and Christless world, must be faced by the candid enquirer.

Does Christianity hold its own in the competition with other systems?

May we satisfy the religious instinct, be spiritual beings, have an outlook beyond the senses, a belief in life beyond the grave, life endless and expanding, and yet cast aside the faith of our childhood? Is that dream of Arthur Hugh Clough, Christ sitting as a forlorn ghost on the side of His tomb, recognising that

His empire is passing, to be accepted as prophetic of the future?

Science denies the supernatural; criticism tears to pieces the documents of the faith. Is Christianity to give place to another and better religion?

But if it is established that Christianity is the best we have or are likely to have, if the mind is tolerably settled in the general acceptance of the Christian revelation, immediately it is confronted with—

Problem 3

For nearly three centuries it was in this country a foregone conclusion that the Reformed religion had superseded the Catholic Church. When Newman with his great prestige led over to Rome a large section of the clergy and nobility and professional people of the Established Church, it seemed to our fathers like an incredible dream. Surely, they thought, that question had for us at any rate been settled; giant Pope grinning toothless in his cave, surrounded by the bones of the slaughtered saints, was not any longer to be taken seriously.

The Papacy has plunged heavily on the downward road. Its blunders, since the declaration of Infallibility, have been increasing and incredible. The excommunication of Professor Mivart, more recently of Father Tyrrell, would, we suppose, have demonstrated to Englishmen, if to none else, that in the line of the Papacy no hope lies for the modern world. But the Puseyite movement in the English Church has produced

a surprising softness for Rome. Pius X. has much more power in this country than in any country which is nominally subject to his See. And the alternative, Rome or the Reformation ? is a practical and pressing one for many enquiring spirits.

The old polemic against Catholicism is out of date ; the methods and the tone of it are unsuitable to the modern world. If we are to be Protestants, we must be Protestants of a new type ; we must understand the position better. Our antagonism to Rome must be more respectful, more sympathetic, and for that reason more firm and more uncompromising. Our objection to the Roman Church does not lie on the ground of new abuses—all earthly systems are liable to abuse and corruption—it lies on the ground of the radical mistake of her claims, of her creed, of her policy.

Possibly no disaster could be greater for the world, not even M. Guyau's "Non-religion of the Future," than that the Reformed countries should revert to the condition of those countries which never threw off the Roman obedience. If England should become as France, Germany as Austria, and America as Spain, we might well despair for the future of the race.

Problem 4

But assuming that the Protestant attitude is accepted, another question forces itself on the modern mind. The orthodoxy of Protestantism is crumbling more rapidly than the authority of Catholicism. The liberal theology which acquired a singular lustre in the United States

through Channing and Parker and the brilliant literary circle which they influenced, and which commanded the allegiance of Martineau, one of the saintliest as well as one of the most philosophical minds of the nineteenth century, makes a powerful appeal to thoughtful and large-minded men. The fact that the most living movement in the Lutheran Church is of the same complexion produces a powerful effect on English Protestants, because we get most of our theology from Germany.

And thus the problem becomes acute to many people who are Protestants and have no intention of surrendering their Protestantism: Is Unitarianism after all right? Was Christ only a man? Are the doctrines of the Incarnation, of the Atonement, of the Resurrection, ecclesiastical figments? Perhaps few people are inclined to become Unitarians, for that body has a reputation of cold intellectualism and aloofness which repels the ordinary mind. But the doctrine of Unitarianism, or at least the latitudinarian tone of thought, possesses a singular attraction just now. "We wish to be Christians and Protestants," say many people, "but we dislike dogma, and we prefer to sum up our position in a sentence: The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

Problem 5

The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants—what an echo from a distant past! At the present time it might rather be said, "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the problem of Protestants."

The old dogmatic view which invested the Book with a divine authority, assumed that every word was written by the Holy Ghost, and therefore established religious doctrines and settled religious questions by a comparison, or even a quotation, of texts, held its own with all the appearance of finality almost to our own day. Mr. Spurgeon was strong in that infallible position. But no power on earth can carry the mind of to-day back to that position. The plainest literary facts, the most unquestioned scientific results, are against it. If a preacher attempts to maintain it, he can do so only by violence and vituperation; he brings the Bible and himself into disrepute. The old view of infallibility or inerrancy, of finality and completeness, has gone. And yet the Bible is more wonderful, and even more authoritative, than ever. It is as if the trammels had been removed; it lives and speaks with a new freedom and power. But the problem, the pressing problem, is, how to regard and use the Book which appears in this new light. The infalliblists and the infidels are equally wrong. How are we to readjust our views? Given a book which lays no claim to infallibility, a collection of writings which were brought together by some intrinsic, though unknown, process of selection, how are we to know what is true in it, and how are we to apply it in establishing religious beliefs, and in the practice of the religious life?

Problem 6

Did miracles happen? or are we required by science to rule them out of court? If we cannot believe the

miraculous stories of the Bible, does that discredit the religion of the Bible? There are those who believe in miracles as easily as they believe in ordinary events; on the other hand, there are those who cannot for a moment admit the miraculous into their scheme of thought. But is there room for a third view? May we not hold with Hume and Huxley that there is no antecedent impossibility in miracles, but that it is a matter of evidence? If the evidence is sufficient we *must* believe in the miracle. And if this is the genuinely scientific view, is it not possible to discriminate, and, in the Bible as in ordinary experience, to believe that some miracles are proved while others are not? The solution of the problem may lie in getting rid of the artificial and dogmatic authority, whether of the Church or of the Bible, and in learning to take every incident on its own merits. It is possible that, while in former days many were won to believe in the Gospel by the miracles in the record, many are now deterred from the faith by those same miracles. There is the greatest need for discrimination. To get rid of the confusion and difficulty that beset this subject might open the kingdom of heaven to many believers.

Problem 7

When the Bible was written, and when the Christian creed was formulated, no one questioned that the earth was the central point of the universe, that the sun and stars were set in the vault of heaven to give us light, and that the drama of humanity is the chief concern of

God. With this cosmography as the background of the mind, it was not difficult to believe that God should walk in the Garden of Eden and talk face to face with man, or that the Son of God should become man, in order to save the race which had blundered and fallen. But Astronomy has completely altered the background. The earth is one of the smaller planets of the sun, which itself is but a star of small magnitude among the myriads which crowd the heavens. The vast distances of the universe strain the most trained imagination. The anthropocentric view of the universe, which is always presupposed in the Bible, and in all Christian theologies hitherto formulated, has become difficult to maintain. We are like men who have entered a dark room with a candle, assuming that the light would suffice, suddenly admitted into a vast and awful cavern, in which the flickering rays of the candle serve only to reveal the impenetrable gloom. The cosmic terror is upon us; we are encompassed with what seems to be an infinity of matter; and our religion, which shed a light, lurid perhaps, but sufficient, on a little world with the lucent heaven just above, and the flaming hell just below, seems inapplicable to the awful distances and magnitudes which have opened on our imagination. Our anthropomorphism has betrayed us; our conception of God as a greater man fails us, as in the old pagan world the many gods and goddesses, thoroughly human both in virtue and vice, failed the men on whom the light of the Gospel arose. Granted that Christ was the Light of the World, can He be the Light of the Universe? Does His religion hold in the mighty scheme which science reveals?

Problem 8

If a man die, shall he live again? This question of the ancient religion seemed answered once and for ever by the Gospel of the Resurrection. Throughout Christendom this problem has been practically quiescent for hundreds of years. Every graveyard bears eloquent testimony to the faith in which men have lived and died. *Resurgam* is the tacit assumption of every Christian, even of the most nominal Christian. But with the decay of authority, the emancipation of the Church, and the doubtful attitude towards the Bible, an extraordinary revulsion of feeling has come. Attempts have been made to discover by *questionnaires* what men actually believe and feel on the subject, and it appears that fully half the population is utterly indifferent about a future life. Probably more than half do not allow the thought of the future to influence them. They are unmoved by the joys of heaven and by the terrors of hell. They believe that Science has in some unknown way shown that survival after death is impossible, and they hold that the eschatology of Christianity, the four last things, death and judgment, heaven and hell, are figments, like the inferno, purgatorio and paradiso of Dante's "Commedia."

Thus it is an open question, one which ought to be discussed and settled for each man's practical guidance, Does death end all?

Problem 9

Is prayer a rational occupation? Can it be heard or answered? Men believe now, as far as they believe

in anything, in the Reign of Law. It is of course a blind faith, for which not one in a thousand could offer a plausible reason. But it is the accepted dogma, the starting point of all thought and practice, that God, if there be a God, has regulated everything by fixed laws, and that everything happens in conformity with the same. If this Power, call it God or not as you please, is wise and good, better leave things to it or Him. If this Power is not wise and good and intelligent, it is vain to pray to it. In either case prayer is useless. I remember meeting a very intelligent and cultivated young woman many years ago who told me that she had given up prayer as a waste of time. She was able to give the time thus saved to some more useful employment, I think it was the reading of the works of John Stuart Mill. Thus many give up prayer on principle, as many others give it up through indolence, through selfishness, through vice. And as Mrs. Besant says, "God quickly fades out of the life of those who do not pray." If we were all convinced that prayer is reasonable, useful, effectual, and if we all began to pray regularly, earnestly, believingly, we should see a singular transformation, the whole world bound by a golden chain about the throne of God, as the poet dreamed.

Problem 10

Nothing agitates the modern mind more in certain moods, and it is the practice of the Roman Church to exasperate the difficulty, than the variety and complexity of religious opinion within the compass of

Christianity. In the background of most minds is the tacit supposition, the survival of the medieval dogma, that there must be one plain, explicit, and fully elaborated statement of truth which all men might and ought to accept. When therefore it is found that in every thoughtful and instructed community, so soon as the incubus of a blind and unreasoning authority is removed, there is the utmost diversity of view, the indolent and the indifferent are disposed to plead, that as there are so many opinions, it is not necessary or possible to decide between them. "Because others have different views of Christianity, I will have none. Because all do not agree about the organisation of the Church, I will remain aloof from it altogether. Because different interpretations are offered of salvation, I will not be saved. Because heaven is conceived by some as a place, by others as a state, and is reached in the opinion of some by works, and in the opinion of others by faith, I will not seek it, either as state or place, either by faith or works."

In this way the diversity of creed, which is due to liberty and the energy of life, becomes, to the lethargic and servile mind, an excuse for indifference.

Problem II

No difficulty is more common or more elusive, than the complaint of the absence of a certain religious experience, which others, it is supposed, have, and the pretext it offers for giving up religion altogether. "I have tried faith, and prayer, and religious practices, I

have gone all lengths in these efforts, but I have no inner response; I have no assurance of salvation, or even of the reality of these spiritual things. I do not doubt that others have this experience, but as it does not come to me, I give it up." Here the doubt is not speculative at all. There is no wish to dispute the evidence, or to deny the facts, of Christianity. On the contrary there is a readiness to admit the truth, and a genuine desire to possess it. We may surmise that minds in this condition are the victims of an illusion; that baseless illusion stops the conduit of the spiritual life. They imagine the experience of others, precisely as that which they have *not;* they do not realise the individuality of all experience. It is necessary therefore to direct their attention to the facts of their own experience, and to show that their experience of faith is *for them* precisely the same as that experience of others which they imagine is for those others.

Problem 12

There is a problem which presses heavily and in many forms on the modern mind, and is often a reason, and more often a pretext, for surrendering Christianity. It is, briefly stated, the social question. The actual conditions of life in this country are disturbing and hard to reconcile with the Christian verities, or even with the goodness and power of God. The competitive system in business drives men into practices which they feel to be unchristian; they surrender religion to escape hypocrisy. Or the sight of the sufferings and degradation of the poor, or of the wealth of the greedy and

unscrupulous; the contrast between the West End palaces and the slums which defile the other parts of the city; the apparent indifference of Christians to the struggles and rights of the workers; the observation of prominent Christians as hard masters, or unscrupulous competitors, in their daily business: these and other things embitter the mind and produce a revolt against Christianity. When the root of bitterness is implanted it quickly grows. And to-day there are multitudes of people more or less earnest who spend all their strength in attacking Christianity and religion generally, in the supposed interests of the people and especially of the poor. It is a curious anomaly; the faith which at the beginning was derided by the world, by the cultured critics like Porphyry and Celsus, because it cared for the poor and appealed to the poor, the religion which has been the only steady force of social amelioration in the modern world, is now attacked and rejected by the poor and their advocates.

Either Christians or Christianity must be strangely misunderstood.

Problem 13

There is a curious return to Paganism in the modern world. Men and women, especially in youth, do not reject Christianity or trouble themselves to find another religion; but they hand themselves over frankly to the beauty and charm of the world, without an afterthought for God, or the soul, or duty to man. Many who in former days would have been ravished by the beauty of holiness are now attracted only by beauty of another

kind, and as if by a reaction can hardly recognise beauty unless it is connected with unholiness. They who never can be satisfied except by the love of God, plunge without restraint into any love whatever, always provided that it is not the love of God. Like the neo-paganism of the Renaissance this may be only a passing phase. But for the moment it is a powerful reaction against Christianity. First it was a disgust with Puritanism and the bourgeoisie; then it became a scepticism about the sanctions of all morality; presently it glorified excesses as the evidence of liberty; now it craves for the unclean in literature and art, finding decency dull and purity insipid. Unless a play or a novel is dealing with immorality our neo-pagans remain quite uninterested. Christianity has no claim upon them; if Christ were here they would unhesitatingly crucify Him; or if with the early Christians they were asked to decide between Christ or Diana, they would answer, "Of the two, Diana, but let me rather have Aphrodite and Pan."

In this amazing problem of the modern world Christianity has to repeat the work which it did at the beginning.

Problem 14

The most persistent, and the most distressing, problem with which I am to deal in the following pages, is that which arises from the existence of evil and of pain. If we are not very sensitive to sin we have become morbidly sensitive to pain. And as in the old theologies man was charged with sin, in the irreverent scepticism of to-day the charge is retorted on

God. How is the pain of the world reconcilable with the idea of God as love ? Many a sensitive observer, and even sometimes the active workers in the relief of suffering, have been driven into dumb doubt, and a despairing atheism, by the brute action of natural law, the cruelty of social conditions, the unlimited variety of pain to which humanity is subject. Hinton's brave attempt to solve the mystery of pain either leaves them unsatisfied, or perhaps is not known to them, so brief is the life of famous books. The cry of revolt goes up to heaven ; the Church itself is paralysed with a doubt.

Others, considering Evil as a whole, carry their revolt to defiance. Accepting the scientific position which limits or annihilates the freedom of the will, they maintain that God is Himself the author of all things, of the order we know, of the evil and of the good. By a daring reversal of the position they charge their Creator with folly in making them, because they are evil, and hope to repudiate the responsibility of sin by exalting the omnipotence of God.

This latent revolt in the human soul, the anarchy which comes from a waning faith in the Divine Ruler of the world, is a bar to all religion. If it is justified or justifiable, we certainly should be driven to surrender the Gospel, the Christian hope, the faith in God. It would be useless to strive with Fate. We could not maintain the struggle for good, or the hope of progress. Not only religion, but morality, would go. Mankind would relapse into despair, and nothing is so demoralising as despair.

My Belief

Problem 15

The last difficulty to be faced is, Was there an Atonement in the death of Jesus? Is atonement necessary, or does not God forgive men when they repent, as we forgive those who trespass against us? Is atonement even possible? How can the sins of the guilty be transferred to the guiltless? What justice or reason is there in the idea of God accepting the sufferings of Christ in place of the punishment which is due to us for our sins? In Protestant, and especially in Evangelical, religion, the Atonement occupies so central a place, that when it is discredited or even questioned, the whole system seems to be shattered. As the dogma was made central and indispensable, when doubt assails the mind concerning it, the doubter is very apt to give up, not the dogmas, but Christianity itself. It would be valuable sometimes to realise what remains if the Atonement is left out altogether. Has there been a false emphasis, and has a truth which is essentially a mystery, and inexplicable, been brought into a perilous prominence, so that Christianity seems to stand or fall with its acceptance and explanation? This problem has occupied the ingenuity and speculation of Christians for thirty years. Must it now recede into the position which it occupied from the time of Paul to that of Anselm, a fact of pragmatic value, because it was a subject of constant experience, but not a speculative question at all, because we have not the materials for settling it theoretically?

These fifteen problems do, as I say, in a sense cover the ground of religious difficulties to-day. Others may be involved in them, but there can be none outside them. If only these could be satisfactorily solved, everything would be done. I know how impossible it is to deal with them adequately, and there will be many to whom my solutions will appear not only scanty but untrue. On the other hand, what has helped some, or even one, may help others. I will proceed to handle the problems to the best of my ability.

But before we advance, let us pause to reflect on the fact that religion is beset with so many difficulties, some of them old as the world, others of them peculiar to the present time. Is it a stumbling-block that the way is never plain, that the course is never clear? Let the reader take heart. In matters of religion difficulties are the means of progress. I offer you an illustration. The feathers of a bird are so constructed and arranged that the mere weight of the body falling propels it through the air, and the force of the wind which meets it will carry it against the wind. For the feathers yield, and so slant. The air rushing against the slanting plumes carries the bird forward, as the wind on the adjusted sail carries the ship. So is it with the feathers of the soul; they are so arranged that the weight of the questioning, or the strong blast of doubt, impels and advances the religious life.

Nothing kills religion so quickly as a closed creed, or an infallible authority. Nothing revivifies it like the discovery of new truths, the opening of wider horizons, the necessity for revising and discriminating. It is

impossible to question the wisdom and the love of God in this singular ordinance of life, that we attain truth with effort, that we reach certainty through doubt, that we are never able to sit down and rest, but must always be up and doing. It is precisely the strain, the effort, the rebuff, which develops and trains the spiritual faculty.

If questions are settled for you, if you never face new problems, if you do and believe what you are told, you may be good children, but you can never be men. If Christianity *had* been the infallible doctrine which the Roman Church appears to guarantee, men could never have grown. Not only would scientific progress have been impossible, Galileo imprisoned and Bruno burnt, but spiritual life would have died. There is a time for milk; but the time for strong meat also comes. If the Papal Church could have her desire, that time would never come; men would always remain babes.

And even if the Bible were such a book as the old dogma demanded, a closed canon of religious truth, in which every sentence was a considered and final word of God, the effect would have been as disastrous as the effect of the Koran is in Islam. It is the difficulty and complexity of the Bible, the open questions, the activity of criticism, the new discoveries of science or archæology demanding readjustment, the disproofs as well as the proofs, which make the book, not so much a Code or a Symbol, or a Confession of Faith, as a spiritual gymnasium, in which the soul is trained by searching, enquiring, discriminating.

Indeed it is a fair inference from the facts of life that

we are here, not to rest, but to strive; not to reach truth but to be ever seeking it. Such problems as are discussed in the following pages may be partially and temporarily solved; in seeking their solution we gather strength and joy. But for those who come after us they will be presented in new forms, and others will be added to them. And if the present world is necessarily a scene of questioning and seeking, a battle which does not admit of disarming or permanent bivouac, we can hardly resist the witness of the instinct within us, which declares that a rest remaineth, and that though now we see through a glass darkly, we shall in the world beyond see face to face.

Books recommended: "The Knowledge of God," by Professor Gwatkin (T. and T. Clark); "Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism," by Rev. W. L. Walker (T. and T. Clark).

II

IS RELIGION NECESSARY?

PROFESSOR WILLIAM JAMES, dividing mankind into the "tender" and the "tough," *i.e.*, the idealist and the materialist, and admitting that the bulk of mankind blend in themselves the two extremes, says in his sparkling way: "If radically tough, the hurly-burly of the sensible facts of Nature will be enough for you, and you will need no religion at all." [1] That would imply that persons of a certain disposition, persons of the highest value to society, admirable in character and conduct, may yet do without religion. Professor James is so profound a student of human nature, and especially of the varieties of the religious side of human nature, that it is presumptuous to dispute his verdict. It must be allowed that in the sense that religion is understood, there may be and there are a vast number of persons in Christendom who do without it. They do not admit or even betray any missing. I remember a writer in the *Fortnightly Review* some time ago declaring that the question of religion, the being of God, the immortality of the soul, etc., had not the faintest interest for him. The hurly-burly of the sensible facts of Nature, the satisfaction of appetite, the business or profession, the public life of the community, or perhaps the delights of Nature,

[1] "Pragmatism," p. 301.

of science, of literature or of art, are all that such men desire in life; and of such things they get on the whole enough to make them content. To worship, to pray, to enquire into the ways or will of God, to meditate or treat seriously the Christian revelation, does not occur to them. If they are losers by the omission they are unconscious of it. If there is a future life, a judgement seat and an account to give, they will with a serene conscience quote the sentiment of the Preacher[1], and will, so far as they know, anticipate no ill consequences.

These men and women may, in popular phrase, be said to be without religion. They are not irreligious, sacrilegious, profane; they are non-religious, of the world, and confined to the world.

But when we come to ask for a satisfactory, a sufficiently inclusive definition of religion, we are not able to admit that the "radically tough" are, on account of their temperament, or natural bias, without religion. For religion is "the conception which we form of the Power that is responsible for our being, our relation to that Power, and the course of life which results from the conception and the relation." To be without religion therefore would be to be without any conception of the meaning or the end of life; that is to say, it would be to be something less than human. No one possessed of his reason can be without thought. Everyone must have some idea of the Power which brought him into being: Haeckel may be of opinion that the Power is an unintelligent force, Herbert Spencer may regard it as an unknown and unknowable,

[1] ECCL. ix. 8—11.

but indisputable fact, or with the great bulk of men we may call it God; but our conception of that Power, however crude or inadequate it may be, is the basis of our religion. On that basis a man may relate himself to the Power, just as an unconscious fact of Nature is related to it, and fancy himself an automaton; or, regarding the Power as unknown, he may shape his relation to it as simply his own scheme of thought about it, or he may regard the Power as a person and enter into living relations with Him. In the first case the course of life resulting will be mechanical and unreflecting, without sense of responsibility, without moral expansion: Haeckel, for instance, presents a moral life so jejune and attenuated that it is hardly distinguishable from that of the higher animals. In the second case the life may be strenuous and noble, but it must be intrinsically sad and hopeless; thus Herbert Spencer in his Autobiography expresses a curious regret for the religious life which he had lost and for the neglect of that side of his nature which in others he saw developed. In the third case, *i.e.*, where the conception of God as a Person leads to a conscious relation with Him, life may become a task fulfilled under the great Taskmaster's eye, expectant of His approbation, and all the wealth of experience and endeavour which are familiar to us in the lives of eminent Christians become possible.

But each of these types is religious in its own way; each has, and must have, a religion. A creature without religion is, so far forth, not a man at all. Man might be sufficiently defined as "a religious animal," for by the constitution of his mind, directly he emerges

out of the evolutionary process from the previous stages of development, that is to say, so soon as he is human and becomes a subject of anthropology, he begins to form some idea of the Power that made him, to enter into some relation with it, and to live the life which is determined by that relation.

The most godless, sacrilegious wretch living has a religion. It may be a religion without God, or in defiance of God. For God he may think only of Fate or of Luck, and act accordingly. His relation to the Power that made him may be only one of revolt and defiance. But bad as it is, that is his religion.

But this being the case, the question will be, not, Is religion necessary? but, What religion is right? Is there God, or only a blind, unintelligent Force? If there is God, can we know Him? If we can know Him, what can we know? Can we enter into relations with Him? Can our lives be lived on the basis of that relationship?

It will be self-evident that if the Eternal and Infinite Power which is responsible for our being is God, if we can know Him, and if we can enter into relations with Him, we are bound to conform our lives to His will and purpose.

Now while it is quite possible that atheistic religions may exist, and may produce certain results—Haeckel's religion is atheistic, for example, and Haeckel is an interesting and useful factor in the science of our time; or again, Buddhism, at least in its origin, was atheistic, and that religion has had and still has a great influence on the world—the general instinct of mankind

points to the recognition of a personal God. Is that belief necessary, are there reasons cogent enough to prove it? Can it be said that, if to be without religion is to be something less than man, to be without God is to be something less than religious?

The arguments by which Theism is defended, the Ontological argument, the argument from Causation, the argument from Design, do not appeal very powerfully to the present generation. For the examination of them the reader may be referred to Professor Flint's lectures on Theism. But there is an argument which has sprung into prominence with the closer study of psychology, and it appeals with direct and living force to people of our time. Mr. Illingworth, in his book "Personality, Human and Divine," has made that argument accessible to all thoughtful readers. Perhaps I may offer the results of that book in another form.

So long as the mind is directed to the universe of phenomena, the Maker of the universe may be easily conceived as a Workman, who works on the gigantic scale, as we work on a minute scale. But it may also be contended that the Maker is nothing more than the inherent force which initiates and continues evolution. While therefore the mind is directed only to phenomena, it is possible to argue for a Being, a Cause, a Designer, as the Author of Nature; but on the other hand it is possible to say that the Being or Cause is impersonal, and to treat the evidences of design as merely the accidental results of the evolutionary process.

But when the mind is directed to the observation of itself, and it begins to realise the significance of its

own consciousness, and to grasp the idea of personality, it finds an ever increasing difficulty in the idea of Being apart from thought, of cause apart from Will, ot development without purpose. The retrospection on which all ordered thinking in modern times depends drives the mind irresistibly to one conclusion, viz.: that the Power which is responsible for the All cannot be less or lower in kind than the Ego, at present engaged in thought, which is responsible for a minute part of the whole. That is to say, if I hesitate to call that Power a Person, because to me a person is limited, an item in a great whole, while the Power must be Infinite, indeed the whole itself, I cannot hesitate to say that the Power is, at the lowest, personal; must have at least the qualities of thought and will and purpose which constitute my own personality, though I must immediately recognise that the Personality so conceived, the Being that conceived, the Will that executed, the purpose which designed the universe, are as far beyond my capacity of conception as the ocean is beyond the capacity of a cup.

The more this line of reasoning is pursued the more certitude grows in the mind that in the Power which is responsible for the world we have to do with Intelligence, Will, Purpose, working by processes which we imperfectly and slowly discover; or, in other words, that the Power is personal, that is, God.

The most direct and convincing argument, therefore, for God is accessible to thought, and may be made plain to everyone who will take the trouble to think. As the argument cannot possibly be evaded, those who

deny the existence of God are under the responsibility of refusing to think. They might be sure of God, as they are sure of their own existence. The reasoning is not intricate; it is direct. It does not demand elaborate training in the logic and metaphysics of the schools. It requires only calm and unbiassed reflection; and such reflection is surely obligatory on every one who is

> "A being drawing thoughtful breath,
> A traveller between birth and death."

But this argument for showing that God is, carries us a great deal further, and when supplemented by other facts of immediate observation, shows us to some extent what God is. Always granting, as even Herbert Spencer granted, that we must admit the personality of God, we know, and must know, much more about Him than Spencer perceived. He is not unknowable, nor unknown. To begin with, if in finding that God is, we find, as we have seen, that He is Intelligence, that in itself carries us very far beyond the limits of Agnosticism. We may therefore dwell a little more particularly, not only on the intelligence in us which assures us of Intelligence as Creator, but also on the intelligence in Nature which appeals to us as intelligent.

Little as some scientific men realise it, the fact of science is a broad and convincing proof of God as personal. For unless the universe were an order, a cosmos, governed by fixed and ascertainable laws, there could be no science at all. But "order," "uniformities," "laws," all imply intelligence. Every scientific enquiry is sustained, and every scientific conclusion is secured, by faith, that is, by

the underlying conviction that the scheme of things is a scheme, and not a succession of chances. The globe spins through space, the atmosphere and other physical conditions of life on the planet are maintained, every living thing lives, and the whole society of graded life on the earth continues and evolves, by virtue of an inherent principle which is described in the Book of Wisdom, as "reaching from one end of the world to the other with full strength and ordering all things graciously." [1]

As the ancient thinkers taught, as the Roman poets sang, there is a mind in Nature which nourishes all the parts and maintains the unity. Not to seek recondite illustrations, keeping within the bounds of universal observation, what is the *vis medicatrix naturæ* on which we instinctively rely ? If a wound is made in the body, immediately a process is set up, which can only be compared with a gang of workmen sent post haste to a wrecked train. I do not control those busy workers, that St. John's Ambulance in the blood and nerves of my own body. I do not even know how they work. It is an Intelligence other than my own which restores the balance, invigorates the weak part, heals the wound. An unthinking Science thinks to evade enquiry by describing this as the healing power of Nature. But directly we think we recognise that the healing power is intelligent, not only intelligent as a doctor, but much more so ; more subtle, more rapid, more resourceful.

Natural history teems with, nay, may be said to consist of, illustrations of the same fact. A breed of sheep from our own colder climate introduced into the West

[1] WISD. viii. 1.

Indies will in two or three generations alter the thick warm fleece for a fine hair adapted to the warm climate. Natural selection may be a plausible formula for recording how the change is effected, but it cannot evade the point that Nature selects, that is, acts in a way which is intelligent, a way which can only be associated in our minds with personality. Or examine, with Maeterlinck, a hive of bees. The modern mystic has repeated the exquisite argument in Virgil's "Georgics," with greater wealth of knowledge, but with less spiritual insight. The unmistakable fact is that there is a soul of the swarm, intelligence which is not to be found in any individual bee, animating and directing the community. The drones which consent to die, when the consort of the queen is selected, the queen, who is merely the mother of the hive, soaring to heaven in a brief inspiration of nuptial rapture, and returning to deposit the ova of a new generation, the guardian soldiers of the gate, and the busy traffickers of the pollen and the honey, are all individually unintelligent, stupid, like living automata. Those skilful builders of the cells have not the sense to overcome the slightest unaccustomed obstacle. Those provident storers of the food for a new generation betray no sense of relation to one another :—

"Sic vos, non vobis, mellificatis, apes."

In a word, nothing is more certain than the intelligence of the hive, than the unintelligence of the bees. Where, then, resides that intelligence which makes the little commonwealth a marvel and a mystery to our less skilful minds ? In Nature, says Science. But that is equivalent to saying that Nature is an Intelligence whose

wisdom, contrivance and power, are manifested even in the life of ephemeral insects.

Much more significant is the life of plants, because while an animal or insect has something of the apparatus—brain and sense organs—which in ourselves is the condition of personal activity, the vegetable world is without these mental organs, and is yet everywhere and always a scene of mental life, which amazes and delights us. Look at the marriage of the plants, the delicate arrangement, for example, by which the yucca shrub is fertilized by the yucca moth, a balance so finely adjusted that the plant could not continue without the insect, nor the insect without the moth. How childish it would be to say that the intelligence of the moth makes the yucca; and how meaningless to say that the intelligence of the yucca produces the moth! But how much more absurd it would be to say that the whole mystical work of life and reproduction is without intelligence! One who could say that has not reflected on the meaning of intelligence, and is so far, however keen an observer, without intelligence himself. No; the Power that made the solar system, that relatively large machine, has made also the minute organic machinery and relations of insect and plant. To treat it as unintelligent, as less intelligent than we are ourselves, is highly irrational.

One other illustration must suffice; where the sundew or the pinguicula found itself growing in soil of the bog and the peat which did not suffice for its nutriment, it developed a faculty which must fill other plants with astonishment. It furnished its fat leaves with filaments and a viscous fluid which could trap the insects that

settled upon them, and it learnt to roll up the bodies and to dissolve and absorb them as food. It is altogether as marvellous and intelligent a process as the action of our highborn sportsmen on the moors or our less distinguished butchers in the shambles. Here is a sensitive and adaptive intelligence at work, which is yet in the plant itself unconscious. If our mind, more developed than the vital functions of the drosera, can recognise the intelligent purpose in which it takes its automatic part, we must at the same time be able at least to conjecture the Mind which is at work not in the plant only, but in ourselves, the supreme, creative, purposive, overruling Intelligence which is responsible for the cosmos.

We are undeveloped, ill-educated, or atrophied and debased, unless we are, like Job, smitten with reverence, awe and adoration before the Mind in Nature.

There is a second fact about the Creative Power, which may be certainly known, and with the growing æsthetic faculty of the race, it must become increasingly impressive. That Power must love beauty, for the most ubiquitous fact of the universe, as it appeals to our senses, is that it is all beautiful. Beauty is not the accident of a particular thing, or a temporary condition. But the galaxy in the sky at night, the sky itself by night or day, the whole earth and the multitudinous seas, the coming of the dawn, the colours of the sunset, the forms of vegetable life, the forms of animal life, the very dust of the earth, the coal measures, the chalk cliffs, the primeval rocks, everything everywhere is steeped in the magic of beauty. Beautiful are the woods when they burgeon in spring,

but beautiful are they when they wane; still beautiful when they are

"Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang,"

or when they are silvered with frost, and covered with the white mantle of snow.

Beautiful is the world which by its minuteness evades the eye of man. Peer into it through the microscope, and you find that the minute particle of dust, or the filmy wing of the tiniest insect, is beautiful and perfect as the starry sky or as the flower-pranked meadows of the spring.

When St. Paul argued from the visible things the everlasting divinity and power of the maker, he spoke as a Hebrew. If a Greek had written the passage, he might have inferred with equal justice "even his sublime intelligence and unfailing æsthetic sense." But it is not only much to know about the Power that made the universe, it is a cause of reverence and love, that the love of beauty is a formal and motive principle within it.

I saw some time ago the gallery of Holman Hunt's pictures. I do not know him. But after studying "The Lady of Shalott," "The Shadow of the Cross," "The Finding of Jesus in the Temple," and, above all, that masterpiece, the portrait of himself, I might with some justice say that I do know him. As the painter of these pictures, as the brain teeming with these ideas of truth and beauty, as the face which he shows to the public in his portrait, he is more familiar to me than many people whom I meet. But the universe as we study it is a great picture gallery of masterpieces, a moving

panorama of truth and beauty, in which the breadth surpasses that of Paul Veronese, and the minute detail defies the Pre-Raphaelites. The Artist can be surmised, and even known to the observer. And if in that gallery is found a picture, His own self-portraiture, the image of the Invisible, the brightness of His glory, and the expression of His substance, we may have ground for saying that we know, or can know, Him better than we know our fellow-man or even ourselves.

But, thirdly, there is a revelation of God in the course of human history, which enjoins on every thoughtful observer the duty of learning and understanding the moral or eschatological purpose that works in men's affairs. When the student of history examines the course and connections of events, he cannot resist the conclusion that there is an intelligible movement in it. The medieval philosopher was apt to think that history is a series of cycles, each returning to the point from which it began. But the modern mind is sure that there is a progress in it all. We never return to the same point, except in the sense that the ascent is spiral. Whatever doubt there may be about a given philosophy of history, we all agree that there is a philosophy in it. There is a development as independent of the individual's design as the life of the hive is independent of the purpose of the bee. Perhaps at bottom we are all agreed that the progress of civilization, the rise and fall of races, the growth of institutions, the arts, the sciences, and the ranges of intellectual life, are determined by a principle which is essentially moral. Emerson said that organised Nature has a destiny,

and that is amelioration. Who can tell its limits ? We are leaving behind the past to enter on a better future. The ape and tiger within us gradually but surely die. Man is in the course of appearing.

But if the principle of history is moral, it is directed by a Being that is personal. Morality has no meaning apart from will and choice and purpose. To read the purpose of history, the moral of human affairs, is the underlying motive for all historical research, and scientific handling of historical materials.

The histories of the Bible palpably aim at this one end. Compact and brief, they are written by prophets to show God at work in human affairs, choosing His agents, punishing and rewarding, with the end in view, and controlling the course of things which is far beyond the power of any individual. The history of England is in its way just as impressive as that of Israel. There is a recognisable progress in it. The people has a destiny. The whole course of development is intensely moral and religious. The idea of duty is dominant. The story seems written to illustrate it :

> "Not once, nor twice, in this rough island story,
> The path of duty was the way to glory."

I am always surprised that this Bible of our own race is not more intelligently taught to English children. I opened a page at random, in order to test the principle. I lighted on the story of Henry V. who went over to conquer France, on the pretext, a daring and impudent pretext, that he had a title to the crown. He besieged Rouen, and the citizens, driven out of its gates, were left to perish between the wall and his lines. Surely

justice slept! And when he passed on to Agincourt, and the archers who there drew their "sounding bows" earned for themselves eternal fame, the reader might conclude that God was not, or did not observe the deeds of men. But wait! Within a few weeks of Agincourt Henry V. was smitten down with disease, and died in the full tide of his unfruitful victories. On the next page the lesson is repeated. The Duke of Bedford captured Joan of Arc, the pure and inspired leader of her king, and the saviour of her land; he burnt her as a witch. As she perished in the flames one might have said: "Surely justice sleeps!" But no, read on; you find that from that time the crown of England lost its possessions in France for ever.

Study history at any point, with the enquiry in your mind, What is the underlying principle, what the directing power? You cannot hesitate to say, There is a moral purpose at work; all makes for justice; poetic justice is historic justice. And even though the mind hesitates to define the controlling Power, and shrinks from the name "God," it virtually admits that the Power is moral, "a stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." And so Hecuba, in the "Troades" of Euripides, an agnostic as far as the gods of Hellas were concerned, exclaims:

> "Thou deep base of the world, and thou, high Throne
> Above the World, Whoe'er thou art, unknown
> And hard of surmise, Chain of things that be,
> Or Reason of our reason, God, to Thee
> I lift my praise, seeing the silent road
> That bringeth justice ere the way be trod
> To all that breathes and dies."

This principle and power at work in history is not ourselves, it is not expressed or realised by any individual. It is intrinsic, as a Conscience, in the long progression of the generations, a guiding thought which runs through human action, as evolution runs through the organic world. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" asks the Bible. We might ask, "Shall not the justice which works through history be God?"

But there is another line of reflection and observation. We are bound to infer the nature of God from human nature. Herbert Spencer is on this point very suggestive, though he does not see how his suggestion modifies his doctrine of God as the Unknown and the Unknowable. "The power manifested throughout the Universe," he says, "as material is the same power which in ourselves wells up in the form of consciousness." But clearly we know the Power best in consciousness, and if it manifests itself in me as consciousness, that is the surest evidence I can have that it is consciousness. When I take into account what consciousness in me means, the sense of personal identity, the power to will, the distinction between right and wrong, and the sense of obligation to do right, the capacity for strong feeling, and the distinction between feelings, with the apprehension that the one set—fear, cruelty, lust, pride, egotism—are wrong, and the other set—unselfishness, humility, purity, courage, and love—are right, I am at once impressed with the conviction that this consciousness in me existed in the Power that produced me. If I am led to believe that I am the

ultimate product of an evolutionary process, I am impelled to the belief that the Power which initiated and directed the Process, contained within itself the result. And if I am one of myriads of co-existent or successive consciousnesses, I conclude that the Power was an infinite Consciousness, containing within itself from the beginning the Will, the moral distinctions, the feelings, the thought, which appear divided and immature in the myriad finite consciousnesses of which I am one. Herbert Spencer hesitated to call the Power personal because personality to us implies a limitation. The absolute cannot be brought into a common designation with the conditioned, the infinite with the finite. Personality means for us an individual consciousness among many. In that sense it seems derogatory to call God personal. But Herbert Spencer's objection has been taken as suggesting that God is something less than personality, whereas it means that He is something infinitely more. The faculties that compose my consciousness are capable of being carried out to infinity, though I may not have the mental power to conceive or to state the result. Clearly there can be a Will which is omnipotent, the maker of the finite wills which are restricted by its omnipotence; clearly there can be a Moral Being which is absolutely good, the norm and authority of our own wavering and struggling moral natures; clearly there can be a mind of capacity to conceive, control and produce what exists, a love which is the motive or spring of all love in creatures, supreme and ultimately triumphant in the process of things. And if such a Being is conceivable, a moral, thinking,

holy, all-powerful Will, reflection on our own consciousness convinces us that such a Being is, and that all the efforts to name or to picture God have been instinctive feeling after that primordial and ultimate reality.

One other line of thought remains to be noticed. It is very curious that Herbert Spencer has failed to notice it. But the omission is repaired by the psychology of the present day, in such writers as Starbuck and Professor William James. Our attention is turned to the variety of religious experiences. The witness of the inner life is collected. Unless all human testimony is to be rejected, men, multitudes of men, have had revelations of God to consciousness, which have left them convinced and have given them some power to convince others. The facts of religious experience are as real and important a field of enquiry as any of those which Herbert Spencer so diligently ransacked. It has been the custom, not only of scientists and philosophers, but even of theologians, as, for example, the Ritschlians, to discredit a large part of these experiences by describing them as mysticism. But it is not enough to discredit a fact to say that it is mystical. There may be a sane or an insane mysticism, a mysticism which violates reason, or one which is the highest expression and justification of reason. Let us leave aside the questionable name and idea of mysticism, and look simply at the facts.

There is a way of knowing God, direct and intuitive, in the lines of ethical obedience. When with all my heart I seek to obey the highest law I know, the moral effort issues in a spiritual vision. The pure in heart

see God. In all the history of men and beliefs evidence appears that individuals have had this experience. In the Vedas, in Plato, in all the literature of the inner life the fact is manifested. But look at the Psalter; it is accessible to all; its evidence is therefore more useful than recondite allusions. The Psalms are very plainly sincere; no one can suspect the writers of posing, or of mere poetising. Everywhere in the book a conversation is going on between the soul and God. What can be surer than God is to these writers? What can be truer than the image of God which is reflected in the mirror of their breasts? Sometimes the surface is ruffled with passion and the image is distorted; but frequently the waters are calm and the Face appears in the tranquil depths. There is the Good Shepherd, leading the soul in green pastures and by still waters, safe in the valley of the shadow of death, or in presence of the foe, anointed and satisfied, fearing no evil, assured of eternal good.

In some ways, viz., for the width and inclusiveness of the spiritual experience, the Psalter remains inimitable. But the face of God is clearer, and the communion with Him is surer in Christianity. Examine the New Testament, and the writings supplementary to the New Testament, like Augustine's Confessions, and the devotional literature of the Church, down to our own day; this experience is mediated by the faith in Christ, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face" of that historic person.

You look into the soul of Jesus. There is no perturbation on that tranquil mirror. Reflected there is God,

a good shepherd, a physician, a holy and yet pitiful heart, a will and a power to redeem, a love that will not let us go.

In speaking of the gallery of Mr. Holman Hunt's pictures I said that the masterpiece was his own self-portraiture, and by it I felt that I knew him. In the immense variety of the religious experiences of mankind, the beautiful souls, whose being and activity have made the religions of the world, the inner life of Jesus stands out as the self-portraiture of God. If, in the vast gallery of existence through which we are at liberty to range, observing and musing, we not only find evidences of Intelligence, Beauty, Moral Purpose, and Love, as the underlying principles of all that is, but among souls which have lived the human life, and shared our struggles and aspirations, we light upon One who seems to us, and admits that He is, the deliberate self-revelation of God, it becomes quite misleading to say that God is unknown, or at least that He is unknowable. By some He is, and by all He may be, known.

Now let us sum up the discussion. We ask, Is religion necessary? We find that while there are innumerable men who have a jejune and perverted religion, a religion which has no relation to truth or goodness or progress, everyone in possession of human faculties has and must have a religion, must have *some* notion of the Power which produces us, must stand in some relation to it, and must order life in accordance with the idea.

But we have seen that apart from all positive religions, or definite dogmas, when the mind begins seriously to

enquire, What is the Power which alone is great? and a necessity, practical and theoretical, is laid upon us to make such enquiry as we are able, the answer which comes back to our question is surer and more definite than we expected. What was once called Natural Religion, as opposed to Revealed Religion, is quite as authoritative, though increasing knowledge and thought have altered its replies, as it was to our fathers. If a man starts out, unbiassed, to seek for an answer to the question, with the world, and history, and his own mind, as the field of his search, he will become increasingly sure that the Power which made the world and him is an intelligent Being, that is to say, a person in whom lie the sources of the personality which is found in the enquirer and in all other human beings. He will find himself compelled to admit that the verdicts of his own conscience, the expressions of his own will, the gradual struggle of his own passions towards the ideal which his better self imposes, are all the imperfect and finite reflections of the perfect and infinite Being that is responsible for the whole process of life, and for his, the enquirer's, existence.

Convinced of this primal truth, which, though probably vague at first, may be crystallized in the formula "that God is, that spirit with Spirit may meet, and that in the right relation to God well-being consists," he will be eager to know the best and truest experiences of mankind, and to learn the religious truths or practices which bring him into the best relation with God. He will be well advised to examine the positive religions. Sacred is the experience of mankind. He

will not lightly dismiss what has been tried and tested by many generations. The vague Theism which he has derived from Natural Religion obviously impels one to expect something more. For if God is the One Power, in the likeness of which we are made, the consciousness which wells up in our finite and individual consciousness, we cannot but believe that He can and will make Himself plain, if not to satisfy all speculative aspirations, at least to direct all practical conduct.

From this point of view the question lies open before us: Is there a truth of God, which, plain and convincing to conscience and reason, and working to produce the best and highest type of man, and the greatest conceivable good of mankind, may be accepted as a self-attested revelation of God ?

Books suggested: "Theism," by Professor Flint (W. Blackwood & Sons). "Thoughts on Religion," G. J. Romanes (Longmans & Co.). "Selections from the Literature of Theism," Caldecott and Mackintosh (T. & T. Clark).

III

IS CHRISTIANITY THE BEST RELIGION?

THE study of comparative religion is very modern. As far as this country is concerned it began with Professor Max Müller. The religions of the world were examined side by side; their common elements were discovered; the distinctive features of each were determined.

The new knowledge, as usually happens, was a trial to faith. We were brought up to believe that our own religion was true, and the rest were false, or, in other words, that ours is religion and the others are *not*. When, therefore, our horizon widened, and scholars with the enthusiasm perhaps of discoverers exalted the other religions of the world at the expense of their own, our dogmatic position was shaken, and a period of doubt supervened. We saw that all religions are in a sense true, and yet as none was wholly true we were inclined to conclude that neither was our own.

The study produced a mild latitudinarianism, an inclination to believe that different religions might suit different races, and if for the time Christianity suited us, in the future a better religion might be found.

Perhaps it was felt more than ever that man must have a religion. What can be more impressive than to realise that the varied races and the scattered families of mankind, from the cultured Japanese down to the

bushmen of Australia, all have their conceptions of the Unseen Power, and all seek to enter into relations with it, and pursue a course of conduct in harmony with the conception. "Religion will die, if men can be happy without it," says Professor Gwatkin. The study of comparative religion shows that religion, multifarious as it may be in its forms, does not die, and men cannot be happy without it. Perhaps the most irreligious people in the world are to be found in England. I remember a missionary returning from India and becoming the minister of a church in London, who told me his horror, after living among a religious people like the Hindoos, to find himself among a people without religion in London. The proletariat of an English city, and the self-indulgent classes at the top of our own social scale, probably come nearer to being *without religion* than any other population in the world. And yet they have a religion: they have a cultus of their own. They do not worship in church, but their theory is that they worship as well at home or in the open air, in the public house, or on the Thames, as others do in church. Indeed, you find that they stay away from church because in their view they are better than those who go. Churchgoers are hypocrites; while they make no profession, and are so far better Christians. There are in England many anti-Christians, secularists, agnostics, socialists, etc., but there are none without a religion. Whatever their conception of the ultimate power may be, however dull, dread, or alarming, they have a conception; they believe they stand in some relation to it, and act accordingly.

Man may be defined as the religious animal. He

stands distinguished from the other animals by this unfailing *differentia*. Atheist or Theist or Theosophist, Christian, Mohammedan, Jew or Pagan, they are all alike in having the faculty which forces them to think of the Energy or Force which produced them; they all of them recognise that they stand in a certain relation to that force, and they all of them live out their little day in a course of conduct which is determined by their creed. No man can escape his doom of being religious. He may have a false religion, a stupid, ignorant, debasing idea of God, an utterly revolting thought of his relation with Him; his conduct may, therefore, be worse than that of the irreligious brutes; but his capacity of degradation, villainy, brutality, rests on the fact that he is necessarily a *religious* animal.

All this the study of comparative religion has made clear and settled on an inductive and scientific basis.

But if at first the widening of the horizon disturbed old ideas, and loosened old convictions, the shock was only temporary. Clearly the comparison of religions, scientifically conducted, led to the enquiry, Is there a best, and if so, which is it? As the range of observation becomes wider and the knowledge more exact, evidences accumulate to demonstrate two positions: on the one hand, all religions may be regarded as revelations, more or less complete; and, on the other hand, Christianity asserts its position in the scale as the highest and best revelation that mankind has received.

We must be particular to recognise that all religions are revelations, or, as St. Paul puts it, that "God never leaves Himself without a witness" to any race or any

man, because, in spite of Paul's teaching and Christ's, this fact has been ignored, forgotten, and finally denied. We can no longer think of Judaism as distinguished from other ancient religions by the fact that it was revelation while they were not. It was revelation, no doubt, but so also was the religion of Bel-Merodach in Babylon, the worship of Athene or Apollo in Greece, the jejune cultus of ancient Rome. Each race received the revelation of God according to its capacity and willinghood. The succession of prophets in Israel distinguished that people from its Semitic relatives. While the Law was part of the general Semitic tradition, as a comparison of the Pentateuch with the Code of Khammurabi shows, and while the early conceptions of Jahweh in Israel as the national God are no better than the early ideas found in Egypt and in Greece, the prophets of Israel brought a purer truth, and gradually unveiled the Being of God, as it is left when the Old Testament closes. Judaism is only superior to other religions owing to the receptivity of these gifted men. Plato's religion is loftier and nobler than any single Israelite's; but he stood alone among the Greeks, and succeeded only in founding a school, not in making a nation. The prophets made Israel, and Judaism as a religion is the best thing the world possessed before Christianity.

We do not venture now to say that Christianity is distinguished from other religions by the fact that it is revelation and they are not. As the Christian documents assert, God had of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers

manners; and the speaking by a Son was only the consummation of what had gone before.[1] It was the thought of Christian teachers like Paul and John, that Christianity was everywhere latent in the conscience and the moral law of mankind. Christ, though invisible and unknown, was lighting every man that comes into the world. Christianity therefore presents itself, not as the only revelation, the only religious truth, standing out among superstitious and godless priestcrafts, but as the completing truth which could gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad, the flower of truth which is breaking into bud wherever men are found.

We approach the religions of the world now, in a new spirit. We never dream of saying that heathenism is without God. We recognise that Confucianism or Buddhism, though essentially atheistic, contains a great deal of revelation, which assuredly came from God. Even the most primitive religious ideas manifested by the records of the palæolithic age, when men offered gifts at the grave of their fathers, we recognise to be manifestations of the same spirit which appears full and unclouded in Christ, and through Him was transmitted to the Christian Church. When we are told to-day that two salient verses in St. John, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," and "it is written Christ shall abide for ever," are possibly taken from a Buddhist book, that pleases us, because we are convinced that Buddhism is a revelation from God, however misunderstood or corrupted. The God who reveals Himself

[1] HEB. i. 1.

in Christianity must have been seeking to reveal Himself also in Buddha. We are thankful when we find the Golden Rule, though negatively stated, in Confucius. That Buddha in some ways foreshadows Christ, and Krishna in some ways seems an echo of him, is to us not disturbing but reassuring. In Mohammedanism we search the Koran to discover whatever is good, and delight to magnify the grand conception of the Unity of God, the precepts of prayer, and certain moral qualities, such as temperance, which flow from the religion. All this is the result of the study of comparative religion.

I may seem presumptuous in claiming to speak for all Christians—possibly many will regard me as wrong or heretical—but I venture on the bold assertion that the truth implied and taught in the New Testament has come into clear relief and recognition as the result of the studies in religion which have made the last fifty years a new era in religious thought; and that now all thoughtful and instructed Christians believe in the universality of religion. It is an accepted axiom that all men have a religion, and that all religions are from God. Men by their very nature are feeling after God if haply they may find Him. The efforts to find Him are more or less successful; in many cases there seems to be an incapacity to reach any noble or pure conception of Him; but as the sun shines in the heaven for all mankind, as the beauty of the earth and sky is spread before every eye that sees, so the Father, who makes His sun to shine alike on the evil and the good, is pressing in upon men everywhere and always showing

them all of Himself that they have the capacity or will to see. If Christianity brings men to a truer, nobler, more saving knowledge of God, than any other systems, that does not discredit or depreciate the rest. If some other view or system could show us a truer, nobler, more saving view of God, it would not depreciate, though it might supersede Christianity.

No Christian with the modern temper would venture to say that Christianity is the final revelation, or to refuse truth which would surpass Christian truth. All that he would say is this, that Christianity is the best we know.

Our enquiry therefore takes this form: Are we, in view of the religions of the world, justified in accepting Christianity as the best? Regarded intrinsically, is its truth the purest and the highest we can attain, or, regarded extrinsically, has it wrought better for those who accepted it than any other religious system or view has wrought for its adherents?

It may be worth noting at the outset, that the founder of the study of Comparative Religion, the late Professor Max Müller, was himself a Christian, and his faith deepened as he gave to the world the religious books of the East. It was shortly after his early study and mastery of the Rig-Veda, that he wrote to Chevalier Bunsen that he would like to go to India, and live there for ten years quietly, trying not only to learn the language but to make friends, and "then see," he goes on, "whether I was fit to take part in a work by means of which the old mischief of Indian priestcraft could be overthrown and the way opened for the entrance of

simple Christian teaching, *that entrance which this teaching finds into every human heart which is freed from the enslaving powers of priests* and from the obscuring influence of philosophers. Nowhere could the vital power of Christianity more gloriously realise itself, than if the world saw it spring up there for a second time, in a very different form from that in the West, but still essentially the same." [1]

In the words which I have italicised the founder of the new science recognises that Christianity must be distinguished from the forms, the systems, the churches, in which it has from age to age embodied itself. If the Christian religion, for example, were identified with the Coptic Church in Egypt, the observer might well hesitate between the religion represented by the ancient building in old Cairo and that represented by the splendid mosque on the Citadel. If Christianity were identified with the Orthodox Church, one might wonder, looking on Russia and Japan, whether the Buddhism of the strong young country were not better than the icon-worship and intellectual stagnation of the Czar's dominions. And still more, if the Roman claim is to be allowed, if John XXIII., Alex. VI., Julius II., were the divinely-appointed vicegerents of God on the earth, if the corruption and cruelty and obscurantism of the Curia were the expression of the Holy Spirit's work, if the sordid superstitions, the confessional, the pantheon of Virgin and saints, the degraded priesthood, and the blind dogmatism, which characterise modern Romanism, were to be identified with Christianity, no

[1] "Professor Max Müller," vol. i., p. 182.

thoughtful man would venture to assert the supremacy of that religion. As the weary nations, France and Italy, with untold labour shake themselves free from the destroying tyranny, escaping ruined and degraded from the yoke, they are in no mood to accept a Christianity which, in their eyes, is Catholicism.

But every student is aware that the Christian religion is not identified with the churches: the churches have sometimes cherished, and sometimes destroyed it; and at the present day the simple Christian teaching, which finds its ready entrance into every unprejudiced human heart, the teaching of the New Testament itself, detaches itself from the corrupt historical systems, and insists on being judged by the light of its inherent truth.

But let us proceed. When we attempt to arrange the pre-Christian religions in an order of truth and value, there can be little hesitation in placing Judaism at the top. "Considered as a revelation or discovery of God," writes Professor Gwatkin,[1] "it is much the highest. No other lays down with equal clearness at once the unity of God as against the polytheism of the civilized world, his personality as against the pantheism of superior people, his holiness as against the debasing conceptions of men who thought him like themselves, and his goodness, as against the bodings of conscience wherever it was awake."

In Judaism mankind reached the idea of God as an all-powerful, holy Being, who is set on the holiness, the salvation, of man. That idea of God is not clear in all the Old Testament writings, but it is the resultant

[1] "The Knowledge of God," ii. 44.

product of them. The people were trained, the prophets were sent, events were disposed, to realise this revelation of God. Thus the idea of God derived from the Old Testament as a whole is as lofty, in some respects, as the human mind can conceive. To complete it only a few points were needed. It was necessary to conceive that God is holy love, not only to one favoured nation, Israel, but to mankind. It was necessary to interpret the goodness which He demands, not as an external conformity to an arbitrary standard, but as an inner harmony with His own will and goodness. And it was necessary to open a new and living way, by which men could be transformed into the Divine image, and come into harmony with the Divine will.

The Old Testament religion, in a word, was the best the world had seen, but it waited to be made universal, inward, and redemptive.

Christianity, not the churches or the Church, but the religious truth presented in the teaching of Jesus, and then in the apostolic teaching about Jesus, completed the old religion by precisely the additions which were lacking. If we avoid for the moment technical terms, and endeavour to look at Christianity as a new phenomenon supervening on an ancient old-world system, we can single out the distinctive characteristics of the religion: Christianity was Judaism; salvation was of the Jews, says the Fourth Gospel; Jesus had not come to destroy, but to fulfil the Law. To the thought of Jesus He was Himself the inevitable outcome of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.[1]

[1] LUKE xxiv. 44.

But Christianity was Judaism universalized. Now for the Jew stood Man. God so loved the World. The message was immediately to be world-wide.

Again, Christianity was a Judaism which discounted the external and ceremonial side of religion, laying the whole stress on the inward life, the state of the heart; the important things in the Law, as now interpreted, are judgment, mercy, faith and the love of God.

But the most distinctive addition which Christianity makes to Judaism is in the person of Christ Himself.

Mr. Lecky in a familiar passage dwells on the debt which Christianity owes to the character of its Founder. If only Christianity were Jesus and nothing else, the world would readily accept it. For the attraction of Jesus is irresistible. The life of beneficence, the mingled holiness and love, the mercy to the weak and the sinful, the courageous rebuke of pride and hypocrisy, the fearless facing of death; the words He spoke, and the ideas which He gave to mankind, of God and His kingdom, of God's thought for men, and of men's duty to God; the mysterious struggle and sacrifice of His death on the Cross; the certainty that He rose again, and was, as He said He would be, among His people for ever in the Spirit: all this rivets and holds the hearts of men.

According to the New Testament, Jesus is Christianity. To believe in Him, to love Him, to serve Him, to follow Him, to live for Him and even to

die for Him if necessary, is the whole duty of the Christian.

Thus Christianity, taken simply, and in its original intent, commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

A philosopher like Hegel will offer a philosophical defence of this superiority. He classifies religions according to the value assigned to the individual. In "religions of mass," as he calls them, the individual is lost in the society; in "religions of individuality," society exists for the individual; while Christianity as the one religion of Spirit proclaims at once the supreme value of the individual, and the need of the society to bring him to perfection.[1] But the philosophical defence is an afterthought, an interpretation. The remarkable thing about Christianity is that it is a fact, a Person appearing in history, a Person whose portrait of outer activity and inner life survives, whose ideas are impressed on His followers, who continues to live and work in the hearts of all who believe. Thus the religion is at all times to be judged by the fact of Christ. That impression of concrete fact determines its place in the thought of mankind. A philosophy of the Christian religion may please and reassure thinkers. Such a philosophy, for instance, as is given in Principal Fairbairn's book bearing that name, may confirm believers and answer doubters. But the philosophy grows out of the fact; the fact produces its effect on the minds of men irrespective of the philosophy.

Is, then, the fact of Christ the best we know in

[1] Gwatkin: "The Knowledge of God," i. 255.

religion? is it the most living and the most fruitful seed of religious truth in the world?

It may seem almost superfluous to institute a detailed comparison between Christianity and the other positive religions, which are presented to us by the study of comparative religion. For, whatever may be said by way of argument in justification of these religions, people brought up in Christendom have never, except in the most isolated instances, or in a state of exceptional degradation, embraced these rival systems. If the early Caliphs swept away the corrupt Christianity of Asia Minor, Egypt, Africa, and even of Constantinople, and many may have perverted in order to save their inglorious life, no European would submit to the Sultan to-day. The most unchristian Anglo-Indian would never dream of becoming a Moslem. Or, if the late Sir Edwin Arnold idealised Buddha in "The Light of Asia," it was with no thought of becoming a Buddhist. On the contrary, he presently sang with greater fervour, though with less poetic success, "The Light of the World." Mr. Lafcadio Hearn apparently became a Buddhist in Japan, but the Buddhists treated him ill, and he would seem to have sickened of the thing before he died, if we may judge from the later letters in the Life. I have not heard of any Englishman becoming a Hindoo; though the lady who wrote "The Web of Indian Life" speaks almost as a convert, and Mrs. Annie Besant is so far a Hindoo that she is a great and successful reformer of that religion. But these occasional eccentricities do not alter the general position. There is no likelihood of modern Christendom exchanging the Cross

for the Crescent; Englishmen will never as a body become Buddhists or Hindoos. When we shake off Christianity we repudiate all positive religion; we admit that it is the best of the positive religions, but we pass on to a Theosophy or to a systematised religious Agnosticism.

And yet, for completeness' sake, before comparing Christianity with these negative positions, it may be well to sketch the contrast of this positive religion with the others which contest, or have contested, its supremacy.

Let us take for a moment the religion which, outside of Christianity, is presumably the best, because it sprang into being six centuries later, and the remarkable man who founded it believed that he was sent to complete the previous revelation. Nothing is more marked in Mahomet than his reverence for Jesus, and his regard for "the people of the book," unless it be his conviction that he himself has a later revelation which can correct the older, and his determination that all, even Christians, should acknowledge his claim. But can it be seriously claimed for Mahomet that he was better than Jesus, or that he carried religion farther or higher?

Read the Koran side by side with the Bible, and the contention melts into thin air. Clearly Mahomet did not know the Bible; he tells the story of the patriarchs, and refers to the life of Jesus in a way which shows that he depended on traditions, perverted and corrupted, for all his information on Judaism and Christianity. The stories which have replicas in the Bible are uniformly inferior. And yet, when we come to ask, What

truth did Mahomet teach which is not in the Bible? we are sorely put to it for an answer. There is the conception of God as Life and Knowledge, Power and Will, and there is the eternal insistence on His unity. But these things are in the Bible with a clearer evidence and a more passionate conviction; while the two primal qualities of God which give to the Bible its distinction, goodness and love, are wanting in the Koran. The prophet of the Arabian desert has no such vision of holiness as came to Isaiah: still less has he the vision of love which came to Jesus. Allah is not ethical; he is an arbitrary despot. His will is law, and things are right because he wills them. The Christian conception is far higher: God wills them because they are right. Allah is merciful; but a mercy which is not ethical is only the encouragement of evil. In the Bible the mercy of God leads to repentance; in the Koran it leads to indulgence. In the Koran there is no such thing as repentance and new birth; there is no redemption. By acknowledging Allah and Mahomet, and by the observance of the prayers and the fast, the Moslem is assured of Paradise, the garden with the rivers running through it, and the black-eyed damsels for delight. You reach Paradise, not because you are good, but because you recognise Allah and Mahomet. But the most serious defect is that, while the Koran is the complete and final revelation, which may not be transgressed or superseded or supplemented, the political regulations there laid down are an effective barrier to progress, or even to social stability. The Turkish Empire is the exact reflex of the book. Once in the ninth

century a noble effort was made by a pious Mullah to reform Islam, but it completely failed. The infallible Book stands in the way. In the early days of fresh enthusiasm when the Arabs issued from their desert with the sword and the Koran, and even up to the great period of the Saracens, the Book worked with a certain intrinsic energy, which it certainly possesses. Among lower races, and in face of a corrupted Christianity, it had a stimulating and purifying effect. Saladin scattered at Hattin the faithless chivalry of Latin Europe, and his own chivalrous character is compared favourably with the best of the kings and captains whom the West sent to meet him. But the victory of Islam has involved Syria and Egypt, Asia Minor and Turkish Europe, in a ruin, stagnation and decay, which seem now to defy restoration or even reform.

The candid student of religions and of governments can hardly hesitate in his decision. There is a radical flaw in the later religion. Allah is merciful, it says, and sees that Jesus asked too much of men, and told them too little of Paradise; it commands men to come down from a higher level of morality to a lower. The Mohammedan world is picturesque, interesting. Everywhere are the noble mosques; everywhere are the traces of the Arabian culture, the art and the learning. But everywhere the trend is downwards; justice is impossible; women are degraded; lust is sanctioned; and love dies.

The late Mrs. Bishop ("Isabella Bird") writes from Persia: "I have been learning for some months past the utter error of Canon Taylor's estimate of Islam.

I think it the most blighting, withering, degrading influence of any of the false creeds. . . . And if there is a more venal, devastating and diabolical oppression on earth than that of the Turk, it is that of the Shah. This is a ruined, played-out country, perishing for want of people, of water, of fuel, and above all for want of security; crushed by the most grinding exactions, to which there is no limit but the total ruin of those on whom they press; without a middle class, and without hope."[1]

The great traveller, whose interest in Christian missions was created entirely by her discovery of the misery of the Christless world, was not astonished when a Persian, to whom she had been speaking about Christ, said "Christ is the *hakim* (doctor) for us!" It is very noticeable, that directly a Mohammedan is induced to read the Bible, and comes to know Christ, that kind of exclamation follows. Christ is the doctor the Mohammedan world needs, the political security, the elementary justice, the practical compassion, for want of which Moslems are decaying, cannot be derived from the Koran. Christian civilisation, the product of the Christian faith, is necessary, indispensable.

The contrast between the two religions may be given in one remark made by a strict Mohammedan in Palestine. He was reading the Bible, and justified it to another Moslem by saying, "I have never found anything which scours sin from my heart as this does." There is no tendency in the Koran to scour sin from the heart; at the best it scours sin from the outside.

[1] "Life of Mrs. Bishop," by Anna M. Stoddart, p. 222.

But it will hardly be questioned that the habitual and systematic reading of the Bible has this tendency, carries the reader on to the desire of holiness, to the search for it, to the discovery of it at the Cross of Jesus where sin is washed away.

Let us turn for a moment now to Buddhism, which until recently numbered more adherents than any other religion. Only in the last decade of the nineteenth century did Christendom rise to 500,000,000, and so overtop the presumable adherents of Buddha. A few words from Mrs. Bishop's graphic pen may set the reader on the right line of enquiry. "Several of the Asiatic faiths, and notably Buddhism, started with noble conceptions and with a morality far in advance of their age. But the good has been mainly lost out of them in their passage down the centuries; and Buddhism in China is now much on a level with the idolatries of barbarous nations. There is nothing to arrest the further downward descent of the systems so effete yet so powerful and interwoven with the whole social life of the nation. There is no resurrection power in any of them."[1]

It is the redemptive power, the resurrective element, the regenerative force of Christianity, which distinguishes it from Buddhism. The founder of the great Asiatic religion suffered *with* the world; Christ suffered *for* the world. Buddha sought salvation in an escape from consciousness, and the pursuit sterilises and destroys the individual soul. But Christ places salvation in the rebirth of the soul, even of the most sinful, into His own image. His object is to make men sons of God.

[1] "Life of Mrs. Bishop," p. 237.

A moral ideal is presented, confessedly the highest that man has been able to conceive; and a power to realise it is offered.

It is, therefore, in the individual soul, in the development of a progressive morality, in the building up of a noble and complete personality that Buddhism comes short. Thus a Japanese Buddhist, who has embraced Christianity, Kauzo Uchimura, makes a discriminating remark: "Indeed I can say with all truthfulness that I saw *good men* only in Christendom. Brave men, honest men, righteous men, are not wanting in heathendom, but I doubt whether *good men*, by that I mean those men summed up in that one English word which has no equivalent in any other language, gentlemen, I doubt whether such is possible without the religion of Jesus Christ to mould us. The Christian, God Almighty's gentleman, he is a unique figure in this world, indescribably beautiful, noble and loveable."[1]

And that conclusion is very forcibly illustrated by the experience of Lafcadio Hearn. He married a Japanese, he renounced his Christianity, he glorified the religion, the superstitions, the manners, the character, of his adopted countrymen, only to make the bitter discovery, that the politeness covered heartlessness and indifference, and that a false idea of God leads to the loveless treatment of men.

But when Christians renounce their religion, it is not to embrace even such ancient and powerful religions as Mohammedanism and Buddhism. The practical competitors of Christianity are Agnosticism and Theosophy.

[1] "Dux Christus," p. 285.

What has been said in the previous chapter, is the answer to Agnosticism. The ignorance on which it rests is in unstable equilibrium. The *ignoramus* cannot pass into *ignorabimus*. If men are ignorant of God it is not because they cannot know. "The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity, that they may be without excuse." [1]

God is sufficiently clear in Nature and in life to elicit our gratitude, our reverence, our implicit surrender to His will. If, withholding the tribute which is due, we lose the vision, and "our foolish heart is darkened," our ignorance is our own fault. We must bear the responsibility. A more thorough psychology, not to mention a more careful study of religions, is gradually pushing Agnosticism out of court. An enquirer may profess Agnosticism in regard to many points in Christian dogmatics, but he cannot plead Agnosticism about the essentials of religion. He knows enough about God to worship and obey. He has Christ before him, and can hardly fail to recognise that there is the model of the right life. If he wills to do the will of God, he learns that the doctrine is of God. [2] Thus he may, if he chooses, follow on to know. His ignorance is no more defensible than ignorance of right and wrong, ignorance of natural facts, or ignorance of the law of the land.

But while Agnosticism is a phase which passes when men become earnest, candid and resolute, Theosophy

[1] ROM. i. 20. [2] JOHN vii. 17.

offers an answer to the search after truth, which may be said to dispute the supremacy of Christianity. It is no doubt a claim with which Christians must reckon. But the difficulty at present is to know what it is. It has not attained to any clear and convincing expression. Whether it admits Christianity or denies it, whether it supplements or supersedes it, we hardly know. The exponent of Theosophy in our own country is a sincere and eloquent woman, who began as a Christian, became an Agnostic, and is at present a Theosophist. She proves her own candour and truth beyond question, and that fact alone gives her an influence such as her teacher, Madame Blavatsky, could not gain in England. But her published writings are not convincing; they betray errors, which a scholar can correct, and arguments and doctrines which any thinking person can dispute. For my own part, the only Theosophical writer that convinces me is Dr. Steiner. But so far as I understand him, he is a Christian with a philosophical bent.

Theosophy must produce its Bible before we can judge surely of it. At present I cannot discover anything which it has contributed to religion over and above the teaching of Christ and the Apostles. Its doctrine of the physical body, the astral body, and the ether-body, does not traverse Christian truth, and, religiously, I do not know that it is a gain.

Theosophy offers no truth comparable with the fact of Christ, which has held the heart of mankind for these nineteen centuries. Its doctrine is esoteric and recondite. It appeals to women of a mystical and enthusiastic

type. It can hardly be said to have attracted the attention of the masses, or of men.

The question therefore which really and practically faces the people of our country and of our time is this: Granted that we must have a religion, must form some idea of God, of our relation to Him, and of the life which should be lived, does the world offer us anything better than Christianity? Is any truth more convincing, more self-evident, than the truth of Christ? Does any view of God and man lead to a nobler character, a richer personality, a more beneficent influence?

The answer I offer to the question is plain. All other religions, and theories of life, may be regarded with sympathy and with reverence; we may well believe that God, who has made of one flesh and blood the whole family of man, is also spiritually present in man as such, as conscience, as religious aspiration, as moral effort. We hold no brief to disparage any creed or view, genuinely held by man. On the contrary we would piece all in the great tapestry of the human mind, and of man's experience.

But Christianity, in its pure and uncorrupted form, holds its commanding place as the best, the most universal, the most redemptive religion, that we know. Its idea of God is the highest; its ideal of man is the purest; its power to redeem the individual, and to advance the social development of the community, is unequalled. Therefore on purely rational grounds we are bound to embrace this truth, and to obey. If the Moslem is true to his religion, still more ought the Christian to be true to his. If the Theosophist studies

with ardour and enthusiasm the teaching of Mahatmas, still more ought the Christian to ask for the Holy Spirit, and to search the records of the faith by that heavenly light.

We are bound to be Christians, unless we can show something better; for we needs must love the highest when we see it.

Nothing better has yet been *shown*. There are views many, and claims many; but none is established. Christ is yet Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Book recommended: "The Sacred Anthology," by Moncure D. Conway (Trübner & Co.).

IV

THE CLAIMS OF ROME

From the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the accession of Queen Victoria the question of the Roman claims slumbered in this island. Men were Protestant as a matter of course. The idea that Great Britain would ever repudiate the Reformation was as inconceivable as that Ireland should ever embrace it. The martyrs, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper, had lit a candle in England which seemed as if it never could be put out. When in the Romantic movement of the early years of the nineteenth century Scott painted the Catholic Church with the rich colours of his fancy, and implicitly depreciated the sour Presbyterianism of his country, he indulged the vein just because he was convinced of the invincible Protestantism of the people. He would probably have hesitated to sneer at the Covenanters and to glorify Rome, if he had seen that his descendants would take him literally, and that Abbotsford would be in the hands of Romanists at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Oxford Movement, and the amazing list of converts to Rome out of the English Church which resulted from it,[1] altered the whole national temper.

[1] "The Catholic Who's Who?" gives an extraordinary evidence of the proselytising success of Rome in England.

The genius of Newman dazzled the imagination of England; the practical zeal of Manning softened the heart. It is said that since the Tracts were published, that is in the last sixty years, fifteen hundred men of position, noblemen, gentry, authors, artists, lawyers, doctors, have gone over to Rome. Twenty-five leading men go over to Rome per annum. Women go over in greater numbers. Cardinal Vaughan used to calculate that there were eight thousand converts annually. This country is covered with churches, convents, schools and colleges; the schools are now supported and maintained by public money; and as the teachers are largely nuns who receive no salary, the money granted by the State, or paid from the rates, goes immediately to further the Roman propaganda.

But it is not the number of the converts, nor the variety and magnificence of the buildings, which mark the re-conquest of England; but it is rather the change in temper and disposition. Fifty years ago the country regarded Popery with terror or contempt. Now she regards it with favour, with respect, with indulgence. To be a Papist is fashionable. It secures *entrée* to society, and the agreeable patronage of the nobility. When an English Princess renounced her Protestant faith to marry the Spanish King there was hardly a protest. The Roman Church is high in social circles, in the Press, in the councils of government. Cardinal Manning used to say that the task of Rome was to bend the neck of an Imperial race—he meant his own countrymen—that task does not now seem impossible.

The Claims of Rome

The Roman Curia has more power in England than it ever had since the days of King John ; there are more convents and monasteries in the country than there were before the Reformation. The army of possession has silently established itself from Land's End to John o' Groats. Some day will come the long premeditated *coup*. Will Rome triumph ?

It is therefore a practical and pressing question, which every serious mind has to face: Is the claim of Rome valid ? She maintains that Catholicism *is* Christianity. Is that true ?

The Roman position is so logical and consistent that we are bound to accept it or reject it altogether. "Love me all in all, or not at all," is the motto of this Church. If, as Newman and Manning believed, Romanism is the temporal mission of the Holy Ghost, the divinely-appointed authority and representative of God upon earth, if it has in the supreme Pontiff an infallible voice for deciding questions of faith and practice, there is nothing for it but absolute and unquestioning submission to this authority ; for that is equivalent to submission to the will of God. But, on the other hand, if the Roman system is not the work of the Holy Ghost, if the Pope is not the vicegerent of God, if infallibility is not vested in his chair, if there is the slightest flaw in the claim, the whole system must be disastrous, ruinous to nations and to individuals. The effect of submission to it will be discernible in the decay of Catholic nations, and in the deterioration of individuals,who take the fraudulent authority as divine, and bow to it as they do to God.

Rome has so stated her position and shaped her claim that the issue is very plain. Either the Roman Church is true, the voice of God on earth, or it is a blasphemous delusion. The logical alternative here is Christ or Antichrist.

Now for the large number of students and thinkers who know the history of the Latin Church, and observe the workings of that powerful organisation in the Catholic countries, Ireland, South America, Spain, Portugal and Belgium, one point is practically settled: If Catholicism is Christianity, the world must deliver itself from Christianity. The manhood of France and Italy has settled that question. The disastrous effect of the priesthood, and the confessional, on the woman and the home; the intellectual obscurantism; the scandals of the conventual system; the interference of the Curia with the national government; the unscrupulous intrigues, and exposed mendacity, of the Papal agents; the unwholesome superstitions of Lourdes and of New Pompeii; the abominations of Rome and the immediate entourage of the holy Father; all the horrors and degradations which were set out by Michelet in his "Priests, Women and Families," and more recently, by the terrible realism of Zola, or by Fogazzaro in his pictures of modern Italy; have convinced thoughtful people of one thing at any rate: if this is Christ's intention, if the Papacy represents Him, if Catholicism as it is known to us in history, is the best that Christianity has to offer, the world which is bent on liberty, light and truth, must consent to let the dream of Christianity die.

Now let any one accustom himself to the atmosphere of the New Testament, to the Spirit of Christ, all gentleness and forbearance, forbidding His disciples to call down fire from heaven on those who would not receive Him, or to silence teachers because they followed not with Him, reproaching the impetuous and persecuting tendency of human nature by the words, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of"; and then let him turn abruptly to the teaching of Rome on the subject of persecution. For instance, I have before me the words of Peter Marianus de Luca, Professor of the Decretals in the Gregorian University of Rome. He shows that the whole teaching of Catholicism from the first is that "The Church can inflict on heretics the penalty of death," and *à fortiori* all lesser penalties. The doctrine, incredible as it sounds to modern ears, is based on the words of Peter, "Lord, here are two swords." These, teaches the Church, are the spiritual and the material; the one is to be used directly by the Church, the other by the State, at the nod and will of the priest.

The Roman Church, therefore, claims the right to torture, burn, and kill all who will not accept her doctrine. And it traces this authority to Christ and to His Apostles! The persecutions which have disfigured the history of Catholicism are not due to the wickedness or infirmity of the agents, but to the principles and teaching of the Church. Torquemada was the honoured and consistent servant of the Pope. The Duke of Alva proceeded to exterminate the heretical population of the Low Countries, furnished with the sword and the blessing of the Pope himself. The Roman Church claims to be

an absolute authority over all individuals and all governments, and to enforce her claim and teaching by the utmost rigours of coercion which human governments have devised. Her theory is to force men into her obedience. Her motto is that of ancient Rome:—

"Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos."

Professor Huxley playfully rallied George William Ward, the most learned and sincere of all the tractarian converts to Rome, on his readiness to put a stake in his garden and to burn his Protestant guests. But Ward defended his conviction, and said that he only abstained from putting it into practice because it was not politic, not because it was not right.

Rome claims absolute submission; she is bending the neck of this Imperial race; she seriously intends, if she ever again gets the power, to exterminate all heretics. Her triumph is a threat and a terror. Her principles are too appalling seriously to contemplate.

But it is said that in the modern world there is no danger of Rome ever exercising her right of putting heretics to death. Well, I have before me an article which appeared in *France et Evangile* of Jan., 1905, on "La Curie Romaine." The writer is M. du Belloy, who was present as a secretary at the Vatican Council of 1870. He gives some account of the working of the Congregation of the Inquisition to-day. It employed in 1870 two hundred thousand agents all over the world, from royal princes down to domestic servants. But let me quote:—

"On the morning of the second Tuesday of every month the president of the tribunal of the Inquisition, who is a cardinal, receives

from the secretary, who is always a *Dominican*, the correspondence of the preceding month. After studying it he sets aside the reports which contain nothing of importance, and classifies the others. In the evening he submits the latter to a committee of eleven *Dominicans*, who sit with him in judgment upon them, and mark their decisions by affixing one or other of three seals on each document, a white one for Insanity, a grey one for Seclusion, and a red one for Death. The tribunal is secret; there are no archives."

M. du Belloy was present at a conclave of Inquisitors in the Convent of Minerva. "I remained," he says, "two hours at no small risk, for had I been discovered I should never have been seen again." He tells us that the three seals mean that the agent is to proceed against the person whom he has denounced, either by getting the man incarcerated, or committed to an asylum, or assassinated. "I remember," he writes "the case of a statesman in Santa Fé of Bogota, whose daughter had become a Protestant. The unhappy father was sent a red seal, and was obliged to give effect to the sentence." Woe betide the agent who fails to execute an order. The red seal awaits himself. "I have good reason for saying," adds M. du Belloy, "that the Roman Inquisition at the present time is much more terrible than in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when it worked for the most part in the light of day. Nothing escapes that tribunal. As Cardinal Guidi, one of its former presidents, declared, it is Mistress of the World."

It should be manifest to every careful enquirer that in this mighty engine of spiritual despotism, worked as it usually is by priests, who are strangers to the softening influences of home, castrated to be the supple instruments of an all-powerful central authority, we

have something not only different from, but alien to, the Christianity of the early Church.

The contrast between the Gospels and the Epistles on the one hand, and Romanism at work on the other, is as startling as the contrast between modern Buddhism in China, and the character and teaching of Sakhyamuni.

The most striking features of Catholicism are, the claim of the Pope, to autocratic power, and to infallibility in declaring points of faith and morals *ex cathedrâ ;* the exaltation of the Virgin Mary to a position of practical divinity ; the right of the priest to search the conscience in the confessional ; the belief that by the consecrating word of the priest the wafer becomes Christ, so that it must not only be eaten, but reserved and worshipped. But these salient features of Catholicism were all unknown in the times of the Apostles ; for a hundred years after the crucifixion there is no trace of them. Then the early beginnings of the Catholic system appear. Pagan practices are assimilated. The machine of Church government is developed. By slow degrees, which can be easily traced, the religion of the New Testament is developed into Catholicism ; but in its full development, it has lost the spirit of the original ; it has become like the systems of religion which Christ combated, and still more like that Roman Empire which it superseded. It is a powerful political organisation aiming at universal dominion. The methods by which it seeks the end are not Christ's methods ; the doctrine is hardly in any respect Christ's doctrine ; the connection with Christianity is not spiritual at all, but

material, and institutional. And therefore if the world rejects Catholicism, it does not reject Christianity, but may even be returning to Christ by the rejection. If Catholicism has become incompatible with liberty, with progress, with science, with criticism, or even with stable government, that is no just objection to Christianity, for Catholicism has become a danger and an incubus because it has deserted Christianity. There is no exaggeration in saying that spiritually, religiously, as a force in the individual life, and as the moulding influence of society, Christianity is the antithesis of Catholicism.

It is, of course, no vindication of Protestantism to say that Catholicism is not Christianity, for Protestantism may have failed equally with the older and more powerful system. But we cannot be too explicit just now in maintaining that Christianity must be judged by Christ and the early records, and not by the Church or the Churches, which may easily be a travesty of, and a hindrance to, the religion.

Indeed we may admit that the reaction to Catholicism is due to the failure of Protestantism. Weary of the ills we know of, English people are going back to the ills of Catholicism which they have almost forgotten.

The search for truth is arduous, the sense of responsibility is a burden, and the temptation to yield to any imposing authority which will acquit one of the toil and the weight is obvious. "The standing cause of the Catholic reaction," says Professor Gwatkin, "is the natural man's impatience of responsibility for the use of reason in religion. In Rudolf Sohm's words, the

natural man is a born Catholic."[1] Men return to the Catholic fold, and have a sense of peace; the warfare is accomplished; rest is reached. They do not notice, what is obvious to the observer, that they have surrendered; they have not found truth, but only renounced the search; they have not escaped the responsibility of their reason in religion, but only seared and crushed it.

The Roman Church has great attractions, if once the sense of truth and moral responsibility is surrendered. Its long past, if one obliterates the tale of oppression, blindness, cruelty and greed, is imposing. Its ritual is a poem, or rather, it is a subtle appeal to all the senses, to all the man except the reason and the conscience. It understands all the human weaknesses. It meets man in the moment of failure, and in the sickening sense of sin. It has a narcotic or balm for every pain. It does not save men from their sins, but saves them in their sins. Equivalents can be paid. Absolution is given regularly and systematically. Obedience to the Church, and the discharge of certain easily performed pieties, will save the soul, apart from any inward change or ethical worth. A genial casuistry excuses all sins, even the grossest, and robs wickedness of its offence if it is practised in the cause of religion. The strenuous pilgrim who was fighting his way to the celestial city through temptation and difficulty, knitting his sinews and strengthening his soul by the conflict, is suddenly packed into an express train; he can remit his efforts, and sit down in the corner for his paper and

[1] "The Knowledge of God," ii. 247.

a sleep, and a comfortable meal; the Church will land him in—well, if not heaven, yet purgatory.

The thief on the Cross heard from the lips of Jesus, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The Catholic does not expect that, but he hopes, after thousands of years of purgatorial fire, to reach heaven. And meanwhile here on earth he escapes the strain of thinking for himself, of discovering truth, of living the life of active personal faith.

All this is attractive in its way, and explains the reaction to Catholicism in England, and the readiness to wink at the frauds and forgeries and fictions on which, admittedly, the Catholic system was built up. The Donation of Constantine, the forged Decretals, the perversion of Scripture, the building of vast dogmatic structures on single texts which are only cited as afterthoughts, the obvious injustice and tyranny, the corruption of priests, the scandals of convents—to these the languid soul shuts its eyes, and snatches at the narcotic and the security.

Protestantism is disappointing. The Catholic has no difficulty in showing its failures. Notwithstanding the material prosperity of the Protestant countries, and the obvious fact that they lead in the path of progress, notwithstanding the virtues which have been developed by Protestant Christianity, veracity, industry, energy, accessibility to ideas, no one can deny that the divisions of Protestantism are an offence. Several churches posing as the Catholic Church, or claiming virtual infallibility, are even more absurd than one. The Bible, which was declared by Chillingworth to be the religion

of Protestants, has been dissected, analysed, discredited, denied by Protestant scholars. And we become impatient of the pretence that each person can understand and expound that complicated literature, without knowledge or scholarship or training.

Protestantism has few charms. So far as it was a resistance to error and an assertion of truth, it was noble, and, to strenuous natures, attractive. But reduced to a State system, as in Lutheran countries; or split into rivalries as in England, where the spirit of freedom has brought half the Christian population out of the State Church; or exposed to the vagaries and extravagances of new pretenders and new creeds, as in America, Protestantism forfeits the admiration and allegiance of mankind. Its virtue lies in its freedom. A Christian may belong to a Protestant church without sacrificing reason or liberty; he does not commit himself to a discredited authority, and a disproved creed, and a corrupting despotism, as the Catholic does. So far, then, the Protestant is better off, and Protestantism presents a more hopeful future.

But what I plead for is not the vindication of Protestantism against Catholicism, but the vindication of Christianity against them both. Christianity is found throughout Christendom, among Catholics and Protestants alike; the person of Christ, His teaching, His authority, the facts of His life and death, the working of the Holy Spirit, the beautiful personalities of Christian believers in all ages; the precepts, ideals, and moral standards which Christianity has created, the experiences of the Christian life, the whole view of God and

man, the course of conduct, the motive for action, the prospects in this world and the next; in a word, the religion which is perennial and eternal and vital, recovering from its grossest perversions in churches and institutions, that religion which makes Christendom, and distinguishes Christendom very sharply from Mohammedanism or Heathenism, this it is which we have to vindicate, believe in and live for. For this new channels and new forms of expression are to be sought. If you believe in Christ, really, deeply, vitally, you will not be dismayed by the travesty of Catholicism, or the disintegrations of Protestantism: you will know that the kingdoms of the world must yet become the kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ.

Books recommended: "Roman Catholicism as a Factor in European Politics," F. C. Conybeare (Skeffington & Son); "What is Catholicism?" by Edmond Scherer (Grant Richards); "Modern Romanism Examined," by H. W. Dearden (James Nisbet); "The Principles of Protestantism," by J. P. Lilley (T. & T. Clark); "Evangelical Belief," by J. B. Nichols (R.T.S.); "From St. Francis to Dante," by G. C. Coulton (David Nutt).

V

UNITARIANISM

THAT there is a surface drift towards Unitarianism in the Protestant Churches throughout the world no careful observer can deny. The Liberal school of theologians in Germany and Switzerland practically stands in the position of Professor Bousset of Göttingen, who in his book, "What is Religion?" anticipates a Christianity of the future, in which the Person and the Gospel of Jesus will be everything, but the Church will have thrown off such old garments as "the conception of redemption, the dogma of the divinity of Christ, the doctrine of the Trinity, the idea of vicarious sacrifice, the belief in the miraculous and the old view of revelation." The points for which Unitarianism has always stood are thus freely admitted by the advanced school of Protestant theologians abroad, and in our own country by the advocates of the New Theology. The charge which Catholics bring against Protestants—of tending towards Unitarianism—is strikingly vindicated. And in all probability the Catholic reaction in Protestant countries, in Holland, England, and America, is partly due to the fear, the anguished fear of many tender souls, lest the critical theology which moves freely in Protestantism, may have taken away their Lord, and they know not where they may find Him.

But if there is a surface drift to Unitarianism, there is an underdrift in the opposite direction. Herrmann and his followers in Germany, surrendering the dogma of Christ's divinity, recover the fact of it in a return to the Jesus of the Gospels, treated as the objective ground of communion with God. English Unitarianism, which has always retained at its heart the Christian experience, as the writings of Martineau show, produces such a study as Principal Drummond's "The Way, the Truth and the Life"; the Jesus who is presented in that work is Divine; or at any rate the train of reasoning there presented leads to the very position which finds expression in the Church doctrine of Christ's Divinity.

It is remarkable, and perhaps typical, that the author of "The Spirit and the Incarnation," and "Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism," Rev. W. L. Walker, one of the strongest and most original theologians of our time, should have begun his pilgrimage as a Unitarian. Perhaps the judgement may be hazarded, that Unitarianism is gaining many people who were brought up in orthodoxy, but not converting the world. It has no mission to the heathen, and only a very limited mission to the lapsed and vicious classes in Christian countries. In a poor district of Aberdeen, where open-air preaching is common, a Unitarian minister bravely faced the people and preached his Gospel to them; but after a time or two they told him that if that was all he had to tell them, it was of no use his coming. "Your rope," said one fallen woman standing by, "is nae lang eneuch for me." Unitarianism satisfies some intellects which cannot accept or understand the dogmas of orthodoxy.

It is a wistful and honest *pis-aller*. There is no shout of a King in the camp. If Protestantism *were* becoming Unitarian, we might forecast its future by the fate of Arianism, which after holding its own for four centuries, and gaining emperors, courts and armies to itself, vanished quietly away. But, as I will attempt to show, Protestantism is not Unitarian, nor can it ever be. It sheds off its Unitarian elements age after age, and goes on its triumphant way. The English Presbyterians of the seventeenth century became largely Unitarian, the chapels still in use were in many cases built by the orthodox, and passed over with the loss of the original faith to the negative side. But the faith of the Presbyterians survived and grew among the Independents; and now a new English Presbyterian Church has arisen, vigorous and progressive. The Free Churches of this country, as by an automatic process, slough off their Unitarian ministers and adherents. In each generation there are a few earnest and seeking souls that stand for a Unitarian interpretation of Christianity, but they drop out; the Free Churches know them no more, and resume their way unmoved.

The decay of New England Unitarianism tells the same story; Channing, Parker, and James Freeman Clarke, supported by the most brilliant group of American literary men, Emerson, Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, might, one would have supposed, have won those unfettered churches of the New World to the Unitarian position. But it has proved to be otherwise. The other churches have rapidly advanced: the Unitarians, even in Boston, have stood still.

Unitarianism

In Continental Protestantism the theologians have produced a widespread Unitarian influence. But who can say that Continental Protestantism is flourishing? Doubtless it is largely Unitarian; but it is also largely dead. Its lifeless services, its paralysis in the presence of an active Romanism and a hostile Socialism, its want of great and inspiring leaders, its loss of the bulk of the population from its worship and its church institutions, are not a satisfactory justification of a Unitarian theology. There is a warning which the wise will read.

But there evidently is a perplexing problem for the seeker after truth within the borders of Protestantism. Suppose you are resolved to be Christian, and convinced that the Roman claims are impossible and demoralising, must you not of necessity follow the prevailing schools of Protestant theology and become Unitarian?

The question may, through its vastness and ramifications, easily get out of hand. We must therefore define as carefully as possible the limits of the discussion.

First, we will try to clear the issue by showing how and in what sense we are to believe in the Divinity of Christ.

Second, we will show the nature and strength of the argument for that belief.

Third, we will try to show the intrinsic reasonableness, apart from all dogmatic considerations, of what is called the Trinitarian, as distinct from the Unitarian position.

In the whole discussion we must keep in charitable touch with our Unitarian fellow-Christians. A view which commends itself to a great thinker like Martineau, and a great scholar like Harnack, men of undoubted Christian life and conduct, must be treated with respect. There is no room for invective or denunciation. Unless reasonable arguments can be advanced, it is better to be silent. The appeal to a subjective experience, which for many simple Christians is decisive, is inappropriate in this chapter. There is a place, both in practice and in theory, for such psychological testimony. The vast number of people who say: "Jesus is God, I know it, I feel it, I have proved it through years of trial and difficulty," must always carry weight with every truly scientific observer. The line of thought carried out with such brilliance in Professor William James's "Varieties of Religious Experience," has opened the minds of all psychologists to take into account such facts. But the object here and now is to try the case in the courts of pure reason, to see what evidence can be presented for the vital belief of Christendom in Christ's divinity, to estimate how far the objections to it can be answered, to look at the subject in the daylight of history and of logic.

In a word, I write this chapter on the supposition that the reader is a Unitarian, or at least that he is strongly drawn to the Unitarian position. I assume that whoever has no difficulty on this subject will pass the chapter by.

1. *How and in what sense are we to believe in the Divinity of Christ?*

We must distinguish between the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, stated in the Creeds as the result of the long controversy of the Ecumenical Councils, and the Divinity of Christ discovered in the New Testament, and verified by the experience of faith. The one is metaphysical, the other is practical. The one is established by a process of reasoning, the other by a process of living. The one is usually accepted simply on authority, as a dogma, the other is known by the exertion of conscience, feeling and will, in the pursuit of goodness and Godliness.

The Credal belief in Christ's Divinity may be without religious result; the other belief is only reached as a result of a genuine religious process.

For Catholics and those who mean by religion submission to authority without reasoning, the Credal belief is enough. They accept the dogma readily, just as they believe, by a very similar act of intellectual humility, that the whale swallowed Jonah; but the belief has no vital relation to them. If the reasoning faculty *should* awake, the belief is doomed. The metaphysic of the eighth century is not real to the twentieth century; the process by which the Catholic Church established her doctrine is as doubtful in reasoning as it is in morality; the Creed, reached by the mutual bludgeoning of the bishops in the Council of Ephesus, is not only devoid of rational proof, it is suspect by the very mode of its establishment. He who sets out to prove religious dogmas by the defence of the Ecumenical Councils, and the theory that they are the work of the Holy Ghost, will succeed only with those who are determined to

sacrifice their reason to authority, and who assume that the Roman Church is the unquestionable Authority of God.

I confess that if the evidence of the Divinity of Christ were of this kind, I should not for a moment believe: I should join the ranks of the thoughtful and instructed men who in Catholic countries have sadly renounced Christianity.

But the belief in Christ's Divinity rests really on quite a different argument, is reached by quite a different process. The belief, to be of any religious value, must not be assumed, but *reached*. Herrmann has pointed out that to Luther the act of believing in the Deity of Christ was no simple matter; it was an art. "Hence it is an art so to recognise this King, that He is true God and man."[1] We arrive at the Divinity of Christ as the first believers did, not by taking the abstract idea of Deity and asserting that He is Divine, but by taking Him, as He is shown to us, and coming through Him to a genuine idea of Deity. We do not first know God, and then say that Christ is God; we first know Christ, and through that knowledge we find the knowledge of God.

Nothing is more barren than to say that we are saved by believing in the Divinity of Christ. Such a belief does not and cannot save. We are saved by believing in Christ; the Divinity is an inference from the faith; we find Him divine because He has brought us to God.

We begin with the Man, Jesus, that person who is presented to us in the Gospel narrative, that person

[1] "Communion with God" (Eng. trans.), p. 167.

who appears in the spiritual experience of Paul. We believe in Him, in His life, in His death, in His words, His teaching, His promises. We are not thinking what category He belongs to, human or divine. He draws us, He commands us; by the faith in Him, the life that is our example, and the death which, as He says, He suffered for us, we are conscious of pardon and reconciliation to God, we find that we are new creatures, we have the experience of the Holy Spirit. Thus we are led to the belief that Jesus has for us the value of God; in contact with Him we touch God; through Him we discover that God is holy, pardoning Love. No other man has or can have this value for us. He is put in a category apart. On the ground of what He is, and what He has done for us, we give Him the unique name, the name that is above every name for us in heaven or on earth. Because by Him we find God and are reconciled to God, and by Him alone, we say that He is the God-man, the mediator between God and Man. We do not deny, nay, through Him we are bound to affirm, a divinity in all men; that men can be reconciled to God shows that intrinsically they are homogeneous with God. But the divinity in Christ is quite other than the divinity in man as such; not only is it the fulness of God manifest in a Man, but it is a redemptive, saving, manifestation of Divinity; it seeks to save other men, it does save them, it approves itself to be God in a special sense by saving them. When we thus see what is meant by the Divinity of Christ, viz., that practical experience of His nature, which was reached by the first believers and is reached by us when

we believe in Him and are saved by Him, we are able to realise the truth which, though clear enough in fact, seems to be somewhat of a paradox. A man may believe in the Divinity of Christ and yet not be a Christian at all; while a man may be a Christian and not yet have reached the confession of the Divinity, though of course he is in the way to the discovery. Another paradoxical fact is also explained: the insistence on the Divinity of Christ as an external dogma may hinder one from coming to Him; for confronting the mind with a metaphysical nut to crack, it may excite all the rational processes of questioning, doubt, refutation and denial. If, on the other hand, the mind and heart and conscience are confronted simply with Jesus, as He was and is, the person whose career and character are the theme of the New Testament, few are able to resist His charm, His inherent truth and unpretentious authority. Drawn into sympathy with Him, and then into obedience, believing in Him, as He asks that we should, we are warmed, we are transformed; we cannot long resist the impulse which led doubting Thomas to exclaim: "My Lord, and my God."

2. We are now in a position to estimate *the nature and strength of the argument for the belief.* Our attention is directed to the origin of Christianity and its records. We are obliged to notice in the New Testament the process by which the contemporaries of Jesus were led to regard Jesus, not merely as the ideal man, but as the Lord from heaven.

Professor Gwatkin makes a rather startling admission.

The whole question, he says, depends on the historical trustworthiness of the New Testament. If these writings are more or less authentic, there will be more or less of a case for Christ's divinity; if legendary, He can be hardly more than human.[1] Such an admission is evidently made in an overwhelming confidence that the historical trustworthiness of the New Testament is established. And Professor Gwatkin is justified in the confidence. At the same time the statement may be misleading; for it seems not only to explain, but to justify, the widespread doubt concerning the Divinity of Christ which is felt at the present time, when the historical trustworthiness of the documents is called in question. The statement does not take into account that the Divinity is being constantly affirmed and proved by the living experience of those who believe, even while the critical and historical questions are under discussion. While scholars, critics, and rationalists, in lecture rooms, on platforms, in pulpits and in books, are pulling the New Testament to pieces, the New Testament is all the time in all parts of the world engaged in saving people. The annual report of the British and Foreign Bible Society is a necessary counterfoil to the activities of criticism. The historical trustworthiness of the New Testament is established in such a way that it is beyond the reach of critics. We may attend only to critics, and rest for a while in a negative conclusion; but directly we turn again to the New Testament, study it, and observe its activity in the world, we change our mind; we see that it is not,

[1] "The Knowledge of God," ii. 47.

and cannot be, affected. Its veracity is self-supported; the evidence is intrinsic. It is a fact too solid, it has lodged itself too securely in the conscience and common sense of humanity, to be got rid of by the ingenuities of a Strauss or a Baur, by the scholastic ruthlessness of a Schmiedel or a Van Manen.

The healthy scholarship of our day reaffirms the historical trustworthiness of the New Testament. Harnack places the Four Gospels in the first century; that is to say, they are the primary, necessary, historical witnesses of Christ. We have no more right to reject them than any other testimonies to any other historical person. The sincerity of the writings is beyond dispute; their date, within limits, is also beyond dispute. When in the second century Tatian made the Diatessaron, the conflation of the four, the Gospels were already accepted as the ancient and authentic biographies of Jesus. At the end of the second century Irenæus already regarded the four as the inevitable number; he compared them to the cardinal points, North, South, East and West. These historical documents must be treated as we treat other ancient documents. No wise person deprecates textual and historical criticism, as applied to them. We are prepared to make allowance for inaccuracies, for legendary and disputable elements. But they are history, and the person who is presented in them is as much a historic person as Cæsar or Josephus: and we know more, and know it more certainly, about Him than about them.

The vindication of the historical quality and value of

the Acts of the Apostles by the archæological researches of Sir William Ramsay sets this book of the New Testament side by side with the Gospels. No ancient history is better than this. If this is not history, we have no knowledge of the past.

The Epistles of St. Paul are an authority of unquestioned validity. Some of them are certainly his autograph productions; the others, together with the remaining bocks of the New Testament, if not certainly the production of the writers to whom tradition assigned them, are unquestionably correct pictures of the faith and life and practices of the earliest believers in Christ.

Thus broadly speaking, while the work of criticism is ever proceeding, and opinions vary about this or that book's date, and there is room for difference of opinion about the correctness of this or that detail, the historical trustworthiness of the New Testament is assured. If we desire to know Cicero, we read his letters and speeches. If we wish to understand Cæsar we read his writings and the memoirs and references of Suetonius, Lucan, Tacitus, and the other writers of the century which followed his death. When we desire to know and to understand Jesus Christ, we with equal confidence and certainty read the group of contemporary records and documents which testify of Him. They are collected in the book which we call the New Testament.

But if this is the right view of the New Testament, if it is the historic window through which we look into the life and work of Christ, we not only have a firm ground to rest on, but we are logically compelled to

rest on that ground. That is to say, the Person who is there presented must be taken as He is presented. If that contemporary portrait is incorrect, we cannot correct it. The attempt to recast it on subjective grounds must always remain inconclusive. If we approach the authorities with a preconceived theory, if, for example, we start with a conviction that there cannot be a Divine man, a Son of God incarnate, and if in consequence we proceed to cut away and discredit all that does not harmonise with our theory, the result will be not a historic person, but only a subjective creation of our own prejudice.

The Unitarian starts with an *à priori* assumption that Jesus cannot be God; he therefore tones down and explains away all the parts of the New Testament which say or imply that He was; just as Tolstoy recasts the Gospel, so that it brings out exactly the teaching which he wishes to enforce, and the rest disappears. But this method is neither historical nor logical. It is only critical in a perverse sense.

Confessedly in Jesus Christ we are dealing with a very extraordinary and unique Person. The first duty is to accept the accounts we possess of Him, and to form a distinct image of His character, His activity, His life, His message for mankind. If we study with a bias; if our criticism is determined by a preliminary rejection of the Christian revelation, we are not dealing honestly with ourselves or with the subject.

The only logical and honest results can be obtained by a careful and thoughtful and connected study of the New Testament as a whole, regarded as the historic

testimony, the only possible historic testimony, we have to Jesus Christ. The impression which that study produces on the mind, the image so portrayed, the Person with whom spiritual contact is so obtained, is the reality which confronts us in Christianity. With that Christ we have to deal; it is faith in that Christ which saves; in the sense that the Christ so realised, so believed, and in that manner saving, is God, and only in that sense, we can and ought to believe in His Divinity.

The study which is here enjoined will make one thing very plain to the candid reader; that every writing in the New Testament treats Jesus as more than, and different from, an ordinary man. The claim of a unique relation to God, on the lips of Jesus, as He speaks in the Gospels, is allowed by all the writers. Seldom is the assertion made that Jesus is God; no abstract doctrine of His Divinity is maintained; but each writer reflects the common conviction, which is expressed in the *locus classicus* of Matt. xi. 27: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."

It may justly be said that the doctrine of the two natures, or the two wills, or the doctrine of the Trinity, as formulated by the Church, is not defended by the Apostolic writers. And when the sceptic declares that the New Testament does not teach these things, the only reasonable answer is to acknowledge: No, these are inferences drawn from the facts of the New Testament in the first eight centuries of Christianity. But

just as little can anyone deny that every writer of the New Testament is agreed in treating Jesus as the unique middle point between God and man, manifested to man in order to unite man with God. Every writer has his own mode of thought, but substantially all agree. That He is the Son of God, the only-begotten, emerging out of the bosom of God, to live a human life and die a human death for man, is the predominant thought of Paul, Peter and John.

That being the Divine Son, He could not be held by death, and therefore rose again, and sits at the right hand of God, is the idea which rings through Acts. In Matthew the parable of the Son sent to the vineyard sets Him in contrast to the prophets, Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, who had come before Him.[1] The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with a similar contrast between the message of prophets and Old Testament writers, and the message of a Son, the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance. In one of those later epistles, doubtfully attributed to Paul, there is a phrase so startling that the A. V. toned it down; the Greek admits of but one rendering, "our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."[2] In the Revelation we have this remarkable fact, that the claim "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" is at the opening of the book in the mouth of God, and at the close in the mouth of Jesus. These are but illustrations of the phenomenon which confronts us on almost every page of the New Testament. Jesus, the Christ of history, was from the first recognised by those who knew Him—it is

[1] MATT. xxi. 37. [2] TIT. ii. 13.

evident in all the earliest and authentic witnesses to Him—as a Being quite unique. His birth was a coming, an incarnation of a divine *logos*, a Son. His life was a manifestation in humanity of a character such as humanity cannot produce, sinless, good, in close relation with God, bent on saving men by a selfless sacrifice and devotion. His death was a deliberate and conscious offering for the sins of the world, by which sin was condemned and all who believed in Him could be forgiven. His resurrection was inevitable. His actual presence in the Spirit, after His death, and for all time, was a fact which they were led to expect by His word, and experienced in the formation and growth of the Church.

It is very hard to see how any reader of the New Testament can fail to admit that this is the concurrent testimony of its writers. It is easy to quote passages which bring out the humanity of Jesus, or illustrate the limitations of knowledge or power which were imposed by His earthly life. An exclusive attention to such passages may justify a polemical reader in saying that according to the New Testament, Jesus was only a man. But that is only one side of the question, a side which no one wishes to dispute; for if He was not man He cannot save men. But when the evidence of the writers of the New Testament is taken as it stands, and allowed to have its full effect, as the witnesses in a court are allowed to speak unfettered and undeterred, surely no one can question that they thought of Jesus as Divine. Whatever may be said of the dogmas which are expressed in the creeds; whatever reasons derived

from other sources, a man may have for disbelieving or rejecting the testimony of the New Testament, the candid student is bound to admit that the New Testament writers—and they are not only our best, but our sole authorities, for the Jesus of history—affirm that He was God and Man, the unique Being, or Mediator, by whom man and God can be made at one.

3. *The intrinsic reasonableness of the doctrine which is known as Trinitarian.* It is not difficult to state the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ in a way which seems to offer a defiance to the reason. The Athanasian Creed has gone some distance in that direction. In such a statement the Church delights to emphasize the paradox of the situation, and to declare with the schoolman, "I believe not only although, but because, it is impossible." Nor can it be denied that there are nations, epochs and individual minds, to which this method commends itself. In Catholic countries the appeal to reason is irrelevant; and among ourselves there are many women and effeminate men, to whom the sacrifice of reason is a positive delight. It is from this tendency of human nature that the extravagant dogmatic formulæ and claims take their rise.

But it must also be remembered that the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ can be stated in a way which does not collide with the reason, but rather offers an intellectual rest, in face of the mystery of the world, the soul, and God. It is only where a doctrine satisfies and fortifies reason, that it proves in the end to be genuinely religious. A religion which begins by the sacrifice of reason is on the way to become a superstition.

Unitarianism

Ever since the Reformation there have been men, a succession of men, who have accepted the truth of Christ's Divinity as the key to the puzzle of life, and the idea of a triune God as the only rational interpretation of God. But there are some tendencies of thought in these later times which set this central Christian doctrine in a stronger light, and make it more intrinsically credible than ever. The intellectual background of our time is Agnosticism, and the reply which faith makes to Agnosticism is couched in terms of the Immanence of God. Now both of these attitudes of mind bring into a clear relief the idea that Christ was God manifest in the flesh.

For Agnosticism, as it appears in the philosophy of Herbert Spencer, has made mankind realise that God, apart from revelation, is unknown and unknowable. Unitarianism always started from an assumed knowledge of God; and knowing, or thinking that it knew, what God was, it denied that Jesus was God. But Agnosticism has taught us that we do not know so much of God as we thought we did; indeed we have no such *à priori* knowledge of God as can justify us in saying that Jesus is not God. God is unknown and unknowable, a presupposition necessary to explain phenomena, but not otherwise known than as the Cause of phenomena. In face of this Agnostic position, Unitarianism wakes to the discovery that the God it knows, or thinks it knows, it knows only from and through and in Jesus. The Father who cares for men and loves them, the Redeemer who seeks to save and recover them, the unswerving and omnipotent Love that will not let men

go, is known in one way, and in one way only, by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus. Confucianism, Buddhism, Islam, do not know this God. Science, philosophy, natural religion do not know Him. But since He is known only in Christ, it is impossible to use the idea of such a God to discredit the soul or consciousness, in which alone it was found.

Agnosticism has in this way shaken Unitarianism. Christ we know or can know, but God we do not and cannot know. Only if God is manifest in Christ do we know Him at all in a personal and intimate sense.

But the line of argument which is increasingly adopted to meet the apparently invincible attack of Agnosticism is that which arises from recognizing the Immanence of God. But this argument, the more it is pressed, becomes more and more favourable to the doctrine of Christ's Divinity. In human personality as such God is latent. The soul is, as such, an expression of God. It is by virtue of the divine spark, the partaking of the divine essence, that we are men. We are directed, not to heaven nor to earth, if we would find God, but within. When I say "I," and reflect on what is meant by the word, I implicitly say "God"; not of course that I am God, but that "I" implies God. The evidence for God lies not in arguments cosmological or ontological, but in the rational and moral nature of man. Sin is a certain blindness which results from egotism. But when I open my eyes, and escape from the contraction of self, I see God.

Now it is evident that this line of argument which

finds God in human souls, leads us to the conclusion, that the larger, the truer, the purer the soul is, the clearer and more certain God will be. We shall derive our best knowledge of God from examining the souls of the best human beings. But this implies that if there is *a* best human being, a man who is free from sin altogether, God will be revealed in him as fully as God can be revealed. We should naturally search the history of mankind for such a human soul; we should expect that God would manifest Himself in such a soul, for the guidance and salvation of men.

But when, with this thought in our minds, we turn to the records of Jesus Christ, we discover that this is exactly what He was. We are enabled to look into His soul; and there for the first time the Immanence of God becomes a transparent reality. The distinctive marks of His consciousness, as compared with ourselves and the best of men, are three: (1) He is not conscious of sin; He has no need of repentance, no memory of having sinned. (2) He enjoys an unclouded communion with God; He and His Father are never separated in will or act. (3) He alone exists, only to save and serve humanity. We cannot detect any personal aim, or any self-regarding activity. He is in the world to save it.

The doctrine of the Immanence of God, then, the idea that God is in us all, leads us irresistibly to the conclusion that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Nor can it be said that the recognition of divinity in all humanity weakens in any degree the divinity in Christ. For it is precisely the

qualitative difference between us and Him, the fact that while He is sinless we are sinful, while His communion with God is unbroken ours is fitful and unconscious, and that, while He exists to save, we are marred by a persistent and shameful egotism, that opens up to us the whole chasm which separates us from our goal in God. The divinity in us is germinal; it is marred and deflected; it is often sunk beneath consciousness and practically lost; we need a regenerative process to recover and to develop it. But in Him the divinity is unchecked and fully developed; and it offers to us redemption and recovery through believing in Him.

The place which Jesus the Divine man has in the Godhead is only inferentially revealed to us. If we are wise we refrain from speculation. The Trinitarian formula, that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, should not be pressed any farther than the facts shown in the New Testament take it. It is the attempt to fix in a clear-cut phrase the truth, that the God we know and worship is the Father revealed to us in His Son, Christ Jesus, and known by us through the Spirit imparted to us by faith.

We see then that the Divinity of Christ is a reasonable doctrine. We see that it is a fact presented to us in the historic sources of our religion. To the earliest witnesses who carried the glad tidings through the Roman world, Jesus was the Son of God who became flesh to unite us with God, to put away sin, to pardon, to regenerate us, and to make us partakers of the divine nature. The issue presented by the first followers of Christ must be presented in each age anew; and every man must make

his choice. The claim which Jesus makes is wonderful, distinct, divine: "Come unto me, and I will give you rest"; "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth Him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgement, but hath passed out of death into life"; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

As Professor Gwatkin says: "There is no rest in the halting, half and half theories, which look for living power to a purely human Christ who never rose with power from the dead. You may worship Christ, or you may seat Necessity upon the throne of God and worship that."[1] Such is really the issue to which the progress of modern thought and discovery has led us. To that choice we are shut up.

The New Testament writers speak with a solemn and warning voice. One has spoken from Heaven; see that you refuse not the speaker. Never did the situation seem clearer than now. There have been many thinkers, prophets and religious founders in the world; and through them broken truths have filtered into the human mind. But Christ is apart from them; He is *sui generis*. He speaks to man not as a teacher or prophet, but as a Son. His words are the limpid expression of Divine truth, making a direct appeal to the conscience and the heart of man. If He did not speak from Heaven, no voice has come from beyond; God is dumb and inscrutable. But if He spoke from Heaven—and the claim is substantiated by the effects which always follow belief in Him and obedience to His

[1] "The Knowledge of God," i. 240.

word—the responsibility of listening is plain. At least it presents a *prima facie* reason for attention and consideration. For, to quote once more from Professor Gwatkin, "whether that claim be true or false in fact, no condemnation can be too severe for the man who snatches at the first excuse for accepting or rejecting it. Right or wrong, he is gambling with truth."

Books recommended: Liddon's Bampton Lecture, "The Divinity of Christ" (Longmans & Co.); Principal Fairbairn's "The Place of Christ in Modern Theology" (Hodder & Stoughton).

VI

CAN WE BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

"CRITICISM," says Professor Gwatkin, "has demolished alike the Catholic assumption of an infallible Church and the Protestant assumption of an infallible Book."[1] Of course, there are Catholics who believe in the infallibility of the Church, and there are Protestants who believe in the infallible Book. But in each case the belief is maintained not only without evidence, but in the teeth of evidence, by the sheer exertion of credulity which refuses to look at the facts. When at the Reformation the progressive part of Christendom rejected the former dogma, the latter was insensibly substituted for it. All that the Church had claimed for itself the Reformers claimed for the Bible. For nearly three hundred years the infallibility of the Bible was accepted, without question and without proof. And then the very spirit which made the Protestant Reformation raised the question and demanded the proof. Directly the question was raised in the theological schools of Germany, and began to find an echo in the far more conservative schools of England, the fact became clear that there was no proof. The assumption was only an assumption, arising out of the unique interest and significance of the Bible, an assumption

[1] "The Knowledge of God," ii, 289.

not made fraudulently, but allowed to steal into the mind when criticism slumbered. No, there was no proof. The Bible never says itself that it is infallible. How could it? for it is a collection of writings from many different pens and ages. It cannot, like the Koran, speak of itself as a book at all. It is a library of books. Very ignorant people might read the words about "this book" at the end of Revelation and suppose that the book referred to was the Bible. Possibly the superstitious awe which gathered about the Bible was due to this misunderstanding. "This book" was the Revelation, but as for Christian readers the whole Canon of Scripture had for centuries been regarded as a single volume, the solemn warning against adding to or taking from the words of Revelation was artlessly transferred to the whole Canon.

This may be said to be the only evidence ever adduced for the infallibility of the Bible. One writer, the writer of a book which was not for some centuries admitted without question into the Canon, endeavoured to secure the integrity of his Apocalypse by warning the reader against impairing it. And by the accident of the position of Revelation at the end of our Bible, the warning appears to apply to the large collection of writings which cover at the least a thousand years! For the rest, there is no evidence at all. In the Bible there are many writers and speakers who claim to be delivering the truth of God, but never does the Bible as such claim to be the word of God. In the collection there is a great variety of literary forms—stories, annals, poems, sententious sayings, prophecies, biographies, history,

letters, apocalypses. Each of these forms appears in its own character, and makes just the claim that such literature makes elsewhere. All the writings are religious ; in them God and His truth are the theme ; taken as a whole, they give us more truth about religion, and better truth, than any other collection of works which has been or can be made. In this sense, therefore, we may call them the book of God, or the word of God. But we have no warrant whatever for saying that God wrote the Book, or that whatever is found in it must be regarded as His utterance. Such an idea is absolutely without foundation, and is indeed irreverent and even blasphemous. When we look at the Book without bias or dogmatic presuppositions we wonder how anyone, however careless, could have conceived such an idea. Everything militates against it. The stories of the Bible cover the whole range between myth or legend and authentic contemporary records or history. The most diverse stages of religious belief and spiritual culture are represented. The old is superseded by the new. Indeed, the great argument of the New Testament is that the Old has passed away. The Law which to the Jew seemed so divine is brushed aside by Paul so ruthlessly that he maintains the position that to accept the Law in its entirety is to reject Christ. He argues that the whole history of the Law is an interlude, but that the religion of Faith runs on from Abraham to Christ in spite of it. How could this picture of change and development, an old order changing and giving place to new, time-honoured precepts and principles and practices discarded, a gospel, or good news from God,

establishing itself against all the prejudices of the Jewish religion—how could a book which survives such an evolution ever be mistaken for a book written, like the tables of stone, by the finger of God, or for a uniform and consistent law-book, a handbook of religious truth and practice? And yet the dogma, the unreasoning dogma, of Biblical infallibility was so firmly rooted that it was opposed as an argument against the discoveries of physical science. The Copernican astronomy was godless because it conflicted with the astronomy of Scripture; the path of geology was blocked by the Biblical view of creation as the work of six days; the most fruitful and far-reaching discovery of the nineteenth century—the fact of organic evolution—was fiercely opposed on the ground of Scripture texts. Above all, the dogma was used to denounce and demolish all scholars who applied to the Bible itself the ordinary principles of literary and historical criticism.

The dogma was so ingrained in the mind of unbelievers like Tom Paine, or of believers like Spurgeon, that both sides believed that Christianity was overthrown, if this baseless dogma were questioned. Paine overwhelmed the doctrine with ridicule, and supposed that he had demolished Christianity; Spurgeon thought he was defending Christianity by reasserting without any evidence the old dogma. The dogma was so hoary and antiquated that to many even now it seems difficult to value the Bible at all, unless they may have with it the spicy sauce of infallibility. Twenty years ago, when I published my "Inspiration and the Bible," a book in which the

facts of the Bible itself were pointed out, a book in which, strange to say, no one has up to this day been able to indicate any misstatement, I was told of a young man, not a Christian, but brought up in dogmatic orthodoxy, who exclaimed: "Well, if that book is right, I shall throw my Bible behind the fire!" Unless the Bible could be guaranteed against all possibility of error, unless it could be shown that the world *was* created in six days, that Moses wrote the Pentateuch with the account of his own death and the mourning for him, and the words: "and there hath not arisen since in Israel a prophet like unto Moses"[1]; unless, contrary to the plainest fact, Kings and Chronicles absolutely agree; unless the four Evangelists can be reconciled in every detail; unless the Epistles of Paul and the Acts can be similarly harmonised; unless he can open the Bible at any point, and know that this is God's word, God's command, even if he has no intention of obeying the command, or altering his course on account of the word, this young man would "throw his Bible behind the fire." This was the absurd position to which the unproved assumption of Biblical infallibility had led even intelligent Protestants.

But no one can fail to see what a shock was involved in the frank surrender of the baseless dogma. Nor can I for one withhold my warmest sympathy with those who in the bewilderment of the change ask, If the Bible is not infallible, how can it be an authority? or, If there are true and untrue things in the Bible, how shall I know which is which? or, If the truth is not

[1] DEUT. xxxiv. 10.

given me in the Bible, where is it given? To answer these and such questions in detail would be a delight. I will append at the end of this chapter some references which may enable the student to answer them for himself. But here, the three questions propounded shall be handled succinctly.

1. *If the Bible is not infallible how can it be an authority?* The answer is: If you take the Bible on its own terms, and read it without any theory of its infallibility, precisely in the same way that you read any other ancient book, *it establishes its own authority*. Hampered by the dogma of infallibility you find the opening pages in conflict with modern science; you find the whole story of the Exodus so remote from the experience of to-day, that it reads like a fairy tale; you are staggered by the tales of blood and extermination in Joshua and Judges; you are puzzled by the ethical standards in Samuel and Kings; you stumble at bloodthirsty sentiments in the Psalms, and at unfulfilled prophecies in the Prophets; you take exception to every discrepancy or miracle in the Gospels and the Acts; and even the Epistles of the New Testament awake the critical faculty by their arguments, their suggestions, their doctrines.

But read the Bible without any theory, and let it tell upon you precisely as any book you read tells; get any aids to the understanding of the book, such as are needed for any work written long ago; surrender yourself to the impressions which the words and the ideas make upon you; and, unless you are differently constituted from the rest of mankind, the Book will take you

captive. Its interest, its beauty, its variety and charm are enthralling. Presently you become conscious that you are dealing with God, and God is dealing with you, in it. From first to last, it is an incentive to seek God, to learn His will, to pray, to worship, to obey. The Book unfolds and leads up to Christ and the good news. There God is revealed, as nowhere else in the world; Christ becomes the way to God; by believing in Christ you are reconciled to God; and the Spirit of God begins to speak within you. The burden of the book is the gradual manifestation of God to man, until He shows Himself in the face of Christ Jesus. The book presents Christ, and that in so real and hearty a way that the reader can come to Him, believe in Him, and be transformed by Him.

All this the book does by itself, apart from any theory of its origin or authorship. The subject-matter of the book produces the effect on the reader. Make all the allowance you choose for pre-scientific views of the world and of man, for the mingled value of writings which long precede the age of historical criticism, for the crude or imperfect moral judgments which are recorded from time to time; do not attempt to believe in anything incredible, or to force your reason against plain evidence; and the Book will yet lead you to God, to the personal knowledge of God in Christ, to the inward experience of God in the soul.

The evidence for this effect produced by the Bible is inexhaustible and overwhelming. Here is one instance from thousands which can be quoted: A man was in Durham gaol, doing a term of penal servitude for

attempted murder. A Roman Catholic, he had registered himself as a Protestant for certain supposed advantages in the prison life. He therefore found a Bible in the cell, and read it to pass away the time. One day, as he read the New Testament, it occurred to him: "If this book is true the priest is not. I can pray to God myself." He knelt and asked for forgiveness. The response came: he vowed that he would go back to the village where he had committed the crime, to show that he was changed. When he was liberated he did so, and though the county police regarded him with suspicion, he began to speak as a local preacher. His work was blessed, and now he is a missionary in India.

A book which works in that way carries its own authority with it. While critics are subjecting it to their critical processes, they are apt to lose sight of its actual qualities, its working power as a book. Just as the critic at work on Homer, endeavouring to show how the poems grew up, becomes unconscious of the poetry—but directly the reader reads the poems as poems, the poetry reasserts itself; so the Bible in the hands of the critics loses its life and power and significance—but directly it is liberated again, with such added light and knowledge as critics have been able to bring it reasserts its intrinsic quality, as the book of God's revelation to men. It works in its own appropriate way; it puts out hands and grips the reader; it shows him his own heart; it wakes the conscience and convinces the reason; it brings him to God in Christ.

I would be the last to deprecate criticism or to

disparage critics, but along with a writer whom I have frequently quoted I protest against "the special pleading of a mechanical criticism, which ignores human nature in its chase after literary possibilities, and can only make out a plausible case by first assuming unlimited falsification and then correcting it with unlimited guesswork."[1] If the Bible is not infallible, neither are the critics. Their conclusions are only valid when they are tested by a fresh recurrence to the Bible itself and by the verified experience of the religious life. One who knows his Bible at first hand can profit by all the work, even the wildest, of the critics; but one who does not know his Bible at all except through the writings of the critics cannot fairly estimate the Bible or the criticism.

The one prescription should be: Read the Bible, daily, systematically, religiously, with prayer for light, and with obedience to the truth revealed. On such terms the critics will not disturb you. By such a use of the Book, sanctioned by the experience of many generations, you will discover its authority, and will not regret the baseless dogma of infallibility and inerrancy which candour obliges you to surrender.

[1] "Knowledge of God," ii. 21.—Professor Gwatkin says a page or two later: "Abbott and Schmiedel are scholars from whom we would gladly learn, but they have shown small judgment here (*i.e.*, in the reconstruction of the Gospel narrative). Critical methods like these will turn any history whatever into romance. As feats of paradox they are altogether admirable; but when they are laid before us as the ripest results of modern historical research we are compelled to make our protest in the name of truth and sanity against this astounding license of reckless theorising, forced interpretations, contempt of evidence, and systematic disregard of common sense" (ii. 52).

2. The second question[1] is: *If there are true and untrue things in the Bible, how shall I know which is which?* As the dogmatists have delighted to put it, sowing recklessly the seeds of scepticism: If God is wrong in His geology how shall I know that He is right in His scheme of redemption?

But we cannot admit a question of this latter kind. God is not wrong in His geology, because the Bible writers were ignorant of scientific facts. His geology is written in the rocks, and only waited for intelligence and industry to read it. Neither did God make mistakes in history, because the historiographers of Scripture only had at command imperfect materials, and had not developed the historic sense in handling them. God's History is written in His book and will be unfolded in due course.

The question, however, how to know what is true in the Bible, apart from the guarantee of infallibility, is legitimate enough, though it never would have been raised unless the dogma of infallibility had possessed our minds. Scientific truth is known by evidence; historic truth is verified by documents or witnesses; moral and religious truth is established by believing and trying it. The Bible incidentally deals with scientific truth, but it is subject always to the correction of fuller knowledge and advancing discovery. Historic truth in the Bible is established by the same methods as historic truth must be always established. That is to say, where we can discover the testimony of contemporaries or the use of contemporary documents the narrative is historical.

[1] See p. 117

Where these evidences are wanting the narrative is traditional, and we must allow for legendary elements in it. Where narratives are poetical or mythical, as, for instance, in the opening chapters of Genesis, history cannot be in question. We are bound, therefore, to distinguish between myth and legend and history in the Bible, just as we do in all ancient literature. The lines of demarcation can be drawn with tolerable accuracy. But the distinction is not as important as some people think; for the object of the Bible is not historical, any more than it is scientific, truth. The Book is a book of moral and religious truth, and truth of that kind is conveyed by different channels, by myth and legend as well as by history. Indeed, the marvel of the Bible is, that its myths of creation are among the most searchingly religious parts of the book; and the legendary passages—like the story of Elijah and Elisha, the book of Esther, or the prophets Daniel and Jonah—are admittedly the richest in spiritual value and religious teaching.

But of the moral and religious truth in the Bible, to know what is permanent and relative to us, and what is only interesting as a stage in a moral and religious development, the criterium must be for us all in our moral and religious sense. There are and must be various degrees of spiritual life, as historically our present religion was reached through progressive stages. But, speaking broadly, the Bible must be judged by Christ. All leads up to Him, and when the truth of Christ is revealed, all that went before must be modified, corrected, or completed. When Christ is found in the Bible, He takes you with Him to find the

Bible. He opens the things concerning Himself. Certainly the Bible fails of its object unless it leads us to Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. That, practically speaking, is its purpose. Apart from its power to fulfil that purpose, it would fall into a place among the religious books of the world, eminent, pre-eminent, but not essentially different from the other writings which have dealt with God and man and their mutual relations. The uniqueness of the Bible consists in its presentation of Christ, and Christ is a living personal reality with whom the soul is brought into touch, by whom it is regenerated, purified and enlightened. By this illumination the individual, as well as the Church, can use the Bible aright, and can range through its varied passages and developing doctrine with a sure criterium, not merely the subjective judgement, not merely the collective judgement of all the ages, but the enlightening Spirit of Christ, who leads us into all truth. The question, then, how shall we distinguish between the things which are true and those which are not true in the Bible, is answered by the Bible itself. The Spirit is promised to those who believe in Jesus, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit which, as an inward light, leads men into truth.

3. That desperate question[1] which is raised by one who is rudely awakened out of the dogmatic slumber by the recognition that the Bible does not claim infallibility: *If the truth is not given me in the Bible, where is it given?* may now receive at least a provisional answer. The truth *is* given you in the Bible,

[1] See p. 117.

viz., Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life, and the Spirit of Truth imparted to those who believe in Him. That truth is a vital and spiritual reality assimilated by faith, not a document, a letter, a series of statements or propositions. It cannot be thrown into any inclusive and satisfactory formulæ. The Bible itself abstains from thus formulating and crystallising truth. If at one stage of development ten commandments are given, as in Exod. xxxiv., or Exod. xx., at another stage these are revised and simplified into a plain statement of God's requirements by such prophets as Micah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel; the stress is laid on the inward state of the heart, on doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God. If in the opening of the Gospel there is a new law, the Sermon on the Mount, transforming the old law fundamentally, that new law quickly passes into a comprehensive principle, Thou shalt love God, and thy neighbour as thyself. And presently its whole motive and dynamic are found in a relation with Jesus Christ, established by faith. And this again is soon represented as an unction of the Holy One, the Spirit within, which makes the soul independent of earthly teachers.

Nowhere does the Bible allow us to rest for long in anything like a formula, a law, a creed. Everywhere it leads us to a living spiritual experience which regenerates, recreates, and endows the soul with direct knowledge, wisdom and goodness.

The Church, desiring to repair what it took to be the omission of the Bible, compiled the Creeds, the Nicene, the Apostolicum, the Athanasian. But the

wisdom of the Bible is confirmed by this fact, that the Creeds are outworn; their language becomes antiquated; their perspective is distorted. Their strictly human origin reveals itself; the suitable language of the fourth, or the fifth, or the eighth century is found to be unsuitable for the twentieth.

Meanwhile the Bible, with its insistence on a spiritual fact, and the verification of truth in a spiritual experience, is never out of date. It continues to lead men to Christ, as a living bright reality; in that way it endues men with the Spirit. And as they are led by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, they are able to use the book fruitfully for themselves and for the world.

The loss of the dogma of infallibility does not therefore imply that we cease to find the truth in the Bible. So far from that, it leads us to find the truth in the Bible for the first time. While we are under the illusion that, as a matter of piety, we must regard everything in the Bible as true, it is almost impossible to find the pure truth of Christ. For, to speak frankly, there is much in the Bible contrary to the Spirit of Christ. And we may be in the same bondage as those literalists of our Lord's time, to whom He said: "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me. But ye will not come to me that I may give you life." But when we recognise Christ as the truth, and find that truth in the Bible, we no longer suppose that what is inconsistent with Christ, even though it be in the Bible, is true.

Thus the effect of criticism on the Bible has not been to discredit its truth, but to liberate it. The dogmatic

handling of the Bible, let us say by Calvin, prevented its truth from shining and operating. To Calvin every part of the book was equally true, equally authoritative. He will as lief cite a passage from the Law, as from the Gospel. He does not regard the words of Jesus as God's word any more than the words of Moses, or of Ecclesiastes, or of Solomon's Song. What a gruesome system results from this ignorance! What a caricature of God comes out from this confused combination of the varying and developing conceptions of God which covered a thousand years of progress! Calvinism, with all its strength and beauty, is regarded, and regarded justly, as an evil dream. It is the outcome of a false method, a misunderstanding. It is the system which comes from the dogma of the Infallibility of the Bible, substituted for the Infallibility of the Church. Criticism, in showing what the Bible actually is, has delivered mankind from that nightmare, the conception of a God who serenely creates men for reprobation and eternal torment.

"Criticism," as Professor Gwatkin says, "has done as much as even science to deepen and widen our conception of the knowledge of God."[1]

If we find it necessary to recall the fallibility of critics, if we are disposed to smile at Professor Cheyne, rewriting the Old Testament, with the clue of Jerahmeel, to show that Babylon and Egypt and Palestine and everything referred to in the book are to be sought in a small district of southern Palestine and northern Arabia; if we are outraged by articles in

[1] "The Knowledge of God," ii. 285.

the "Encyclopædia Biblica," which give the impression that no words of Jesus are sure except those which show his limitations; and that the four acknowledged Epistles of Paul cannot be written by him; let us retain our judgement, our clear sight. We must not be made extravagant by the extravagances of critics. Isolated from life and mankind, in the rarefied air of the study and the lecture-room, individual critics may carry their method to an extreme which discredits the method. But let us grasp the fact, that a cautious, sober and reverent criticism, such as we have developed in our English and Scottish theological schools, is a gain to the understanding of the Bible, and a vindication of its religious value.

The following extract from the *Expository Times*[1] may illustrate the positive effect of the Bible, even of the Old Testament, when approached in the critical way :—

"About the year 1868, I made the acquaintance at Biarritz of a French Protestant gentleman, who told me the story of his conversion. Nominally a Protestant, but utterly indifferent, he was studying painting at Naples. He found that he had mistaken his vocation; his real bent was for languages. Taking up philology, he began to read the Hebrew of the early chapters of Genesis for linguistic purposes only. Soon a deeper interest was awakened. He had studied but a few chapters before he became convinced of the truth of revelation. He spent a great part of his subsequent life in endeavouring to improve the French of the Old and New Testaments.

"A few years afterwards I made acquaintance at the meeting of the Société des Sciences et des Arts de Bayonne, with M. H. du Boucher, who afterwards founded the Société de Borda, at Dax. He was nominally a Roman Catholic, really an unbeliever. Fond of languages, he took up the study of the Hebrew of the early chapters of Genesis. On February 17th, 1875, he read at a meeting of the Bayonne Society, a

[1] Vol. xviii., No. 11, p. 524.

paper entitled 'Le Chapitre V de la Genèse et l'Archéologie Préhistorique.' . . . . There were present two of the cathedral clergy, myself, several Roman Catholic laymen, a Jew, and some militant freethinkers. The purport of the paper was to show that the names of the patriarchs might be tribal, or refer to inventions or steps in civilisation. M. du Boucher spoke of his joy in finding science confirm revelation; still he offered to submit to the higher authority of the church, if his interpretation were in error. Then the discussion broke out. The freethinkers objected that the whole method was faulty and *à priori*, that it was impossible otherwise to arrive at such conclusions. M. du Boucher insisted that he had gone to the study without preconceived opinions, that he had gathered his convictions from the study. The clergy maintained that such a result was possible *sans arrière pensée réligieuse;* that the Catholic church has not imposed any interpretation on this chapter, and that opinion on it is altogether free. M. du Boucher courageously faced the storm, and maintained the reality of his conversion.

"I think that Archbishop Leighton mentions the case of a man being converted by hearing this GEN. v. read in Glasgow Cathedral; but this was from the repetition of the words 'he died,' and from a different order of ideas. Do not such facts show us that the convictions of faith and the demonstrations of science lie in different mental planes? The demonstrations of science can be taught with fitting opportunity to any capable of understanding them. Science is communicable. No one knows what will, or what may, bring the conviction of faith home to one's mind. What will have the deepest influence on one man will have none at all on another. 'The Spirit bloweth where it listeth.' All means are powerful in His hands.

SARE, BASSES PYRÉNÉES. WENTWORTH WEBSTER."

These instances serve to show that the Bible, read without prejudice or bias, is well able to establish its character as divine revelation. Indeed, nothing is needed but the careful perusal, to reach even the highest conception which has ever been entertained of the Book. It is true that if a person like Tom Paine, or his modern imitators, searches the book simply to ridicule and depreciate it, the strong *parti pris* may blind the eyes to its beauty and significance. "You see that buzzard,"

said a Christian, on a Mississippi steamer, to a man of this type who had been pulling the Bible to pieces, "it takes no notice of the sunlight, of the cultivated fields, or of the broad river; its only interest in the landscape is any carrion which its searching eye can detect." No doubt it is possible to read the Bible in this way, to dwell on any signs of scientific or historic blundering, to cite the instances of a backward moral development, the precepts or practices which had sway in the twilight of religion, the infirmities of Bible characters, the limitations of even the greatest writers. But the fault in that case is in the reader; no one can prevent a self-imposed blindness. That same reader, finding the Bible for the first time, and not connecting it with a religion which he is interested to attack, reading the pages innocently and curiously, would receive a totally different impression. He would be enthralled with the interest of the stories, surprised by the nobility of the poetry, moved by the sense of another, a spiritual, world, which pervades the book. Coming to the story of Jesus, he would at once recognise that there is the greatest, the loftiest, the truest that the world has known; and he would sympathise with the men who set about the task of proclaiming Him to their kind. The prejudice which blinds men to the Bible is partly dogmatic and partly of course moral. No one living an unclean life, and indulging in the pride of the human heart, or the bitterness and contempt of man, which is the blight of human nature, can read the book without discomfort. The readiest mode of peace is to leave it unread, or to denounce it and deride it. It holds a mirror up to the

heart in a singular way and forces a man to reflect. But in the main the prejudice which blinds men to the Bible is the result of the dogma, which represents it as a book written by God, and guaranteed against every kind of error. To read a book which is presented to us on those terms, one must blind one's eyes; if some blind their eyes to its faults, others will blind them to its merits. The blind dogma demands blind readers; the pious must be blind, so must the impious.

Adam Bede, we are shrewdly told, preferred reading the Apocrypha, because there he might exercise his own judgement about the truth of what he read. If he read the Canonical Scriptures, his judgement must lie dormant. No device could be found more calculated to destroy the interest of a book than a dogmatic proviso of this kind. Unjustified, as we have seen, by the Bible itself, it is condemned by the effects which it produces.

No, let the reader read, without theory or preconceived idea, of what the Bible should be, and all will be well. Let him read, as Dr. Courtney does, in his "Literary Man's Bible," accepting the current critical results, and treating the book simply as literature. Let him endeavour to look at these writings just as he would look at writings of a similar antiquity, and handed down to us in a similar way. The Bible will produce its own effect; no candid mind can miss it.

But the one fear, the fear that is largely realised to-day, is that we should give up reading the Bible, should leave it on a shelf, under the impression, either that we know it, or that it is not worth knowing. The

supreme precept in reference to it, far more important than any directions about the method or the presuppositions of the study is—Read it.

No difficulties in the Bible are worth considering compared with the difficulties of those who cease to read it. Out of their lives has gone not only a great intellectual discipline, a touchstone of literary taste, a handbook of ethics and conduct, but the master instrument for holding the soul in communion with God. They become weak and impoverished and blind, or dark with superstition and ignorance.

Read the Book. Consider that here you have the greatest book in the world, the fountain-head of modern literature; remember the past, the souls that have been fed and strengthened on this spiritual food, the deeds that have been done, the lives that have been led, by its inspiration. Hold the Book close, and aim at mastering it. Learn its contents, understand its spirit. Knit it to your life, and shape your life by it. More and more it will convince you that if the dogmas about it are extravagant they err, not in magnifying it unduly, but only in magnifying it in a mistaken way.

Books recommended: "Inspiration and the Bible," "Revelation and the Bible," "The Word of God," by R. F. Horton (T. Fisher Unwin); "The Oracles of God," by Professor Sanday (Longmans & Co.); "Who Wrote the Bible?" by Dr. Washington Gladden (J. Clarke & Co.).

VII

IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IDENTICAL WITH BELIEF IN MIRACLES?

As we learn to take a true view of the Bible the difficulty which the modern mind feels in accepting the miraculous is considerably lessened. We are not required to believe a miracle simply because it is recorded in the Bible. Historical and literary criticism alike teach us to discriminate, to recognise that some miraculous stories in the Bible rest on a much stronger foundation than others, and that many make no claim at all to our belief as literal occurrences, but are merely the dressing and illustration of certain religious truths. A miracle in the Bible is to be treated like a miracle elsewhere; it is to be treated, accepted or rejected, entirely on the evidence which is offered for it.

But while we are no longer asked to believe a miracle simply because it occurs in the Bible, a wider acquaintance with the facts, the psychic and the physical facts, which come within our observation, makes us increasingly wary of saying that a thing could not happen, or that it did not happen. Matthew Arnold's curt dogma in the seventies, when the conflict about the supernatural was entering on an acute stage, "Miracles do not happen," sounds very thin and silly. It would be just as true to say that miracles are always happening,

and the great difficulty is to determine what is not miraculous. For example, when the modern physicist assures us on experimental grounds that the atom, itself so infinitesimal as entirely to elude our vision, is inhabited by electrons, which relatively to itself are so small that "the electron ranges about in the atom as a mouse might in a cathedral," can we any more deny that matter, which is entirely composed of atoms, is itself a miracle? It defies, if not the belief, at any rate the imagination, of the ordinary mind quite as much as any miracle contained in the Bible. Curiously enough, it is science itself that now makes us hesitate to disbelieve the miraculous, science which in the seventies was so sure that miracles do not happen.

While, therefore, the trend of modern criticism has given us a greater freedom in handling the miraculous stories in the Bible, the trend of modern science has revealed to us that much, very much, is possible, which once was considered impossible; in Augustine's remarkable and prescient phrase, miracle is not contrary to nature, but only to what we know of nature (*non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura*).[1] We may express the position which we are now bound to take up in a formula: While the miracles in the Bible cannot be believed simply because they are in the Bible, they cannot be rejected simply because they are miracles.

"The great difficulty, it may be said," writes Professor Sanday, "is to *make both ends meet*, on the one hand the presuppositions of science, and on the other

[1] "The Life of Christ in Recent Research," Professor Sanday, p. 216.

hand the presuppositions of religion; on the one hand the data of philosophy, and on the other hand the data of history."[1]

The effort to make both ends meet certainly involves giving up a great deal which has been very confidently believed for many ages; all progress in knowledge involves such surrenders. But the effort does not involve giving up the miraculous, or even the miracles of the Bible.

What is a miracle? If we define it as an event which demands a violation of natural law, we justify the denial which science makes of the miraculous. There can be no violation of natural law; there can only be the suspension of one natural law by the operation of another. For instance, it is a violation of natural law, that the stones of the quarry should rise into the columns and dome of St. Paul's; but the violation is merely the intrusion of human intelligence, will, and energy. But if nature includes volition, the building of St. Paul's does not violate the laws of nature; it is only that the law of gravitation, which forbids stones to rise, is suspended by the human energy which raises them.

What then is a miracle? It is not a violation of natural law, but it is the modification of one or another law of nature by the intrusion of a law, which though spiritual is not unnatural. To speak of supernatural is a misuse of terms; a correct definition of nature includes the spiritual, the facts of psychology, mental processes and the action of will. We may speak of the superhuman; indeed we are bound to recognise an intelli-

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

gence, a will, at work in things, which is far above our own—that is, superhuman; but we have no right to call it supernatural. Nature from the first embraced all that has ever been called supernatural. The evolutionary process, the development of species, the globe as a place of human habitation, and the human beings adapted to it, every will, or mental energy, nay every leaf thrown out by a tree in spring, is "supernatural." Nature itself includes the so-called supernatural. But by a miracle is meant an occurrence in nature, and according to natural law, which calls our attention to the work, the purpose, the will of the superhuman being in nature. Whatever establishes a belief in God, and shows us His will, is a miracle. Whenever the natural order speaks intelligibly and proclaims itself as the work of God, that is miraculous. A miracle occurs when the soul is in contact with God. It is not supernatural, for God is in the world and in man from the beginning; it is only superhuman, man comes into touch with the Being, akin to him, but so far above him; within the plane of nature the finite and the infinite meet.

Now, as we begin to see that a miracle is simply the experience of this contact between man and God, we are perfectly sure that miracles have happened, and do happen. Every time a prayer is answered a miracle occurs. Every time a gifted soul, by its intense realisation of God brings others into a similar experience of God, the primal miracle of revelation is repeated. All genuine religion is miraculous, it is the discovery in the field of nature that there is a superhuman, it is the

intercourse of the human with the superhuman. Everything that authenticates or reproduces the genuine religious experience is a miracle. The greatest and yet the most frequent miracle is a noble religious personality; a person who walks as seeing Him who is invisible, who lives in communion with God, who brings into human life the sense of God, the will of God, the thought of God.

The great miracles of the Bible are the portraits of such personalities, the persons themselves, no doubt, for those who saw and heard them, but for us the delineation of them. Here legend may serve a purpose second only to history; an ideal creation may be as miraculous as a biography. In the Bible both kinds of miraculous personality abound—we may watch with composure the attempt of criticism to settle which is which. Abraham is a miracle, so is Moses, so is Samuel. In these men God becomes a reality to men, His purpose is disclosed, His will is done. The prophets whose authentic writings are before us, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Ezekiel and the Second Isaiah, Zechariah and Haggai, these are all miracles, human minds in which God becomes distinct and articulate, through which the thought of revelation is worked out. John the Baptist is such a mind, calling men to repentance and announcing his successor. Jesus is the supreme miracle of history. In Him God was manifest as never before or since. His consciousness, as it is mirrored in the Gospel narratives, produces a unique impression on us; sinless, He wars against sin; in virtual identity with God, He lives in hourly

dependence on Him; God is in all His thought and action, in the yearning love over sinful men, in the purpose to save them, in the offering of the cross by which they were saved. This personality is *the* miracle. To it the world recurs in every succeeding generation with fresh wonder. Paul is a miracle; the way in which he was possessed by Christ, and began to preach whom he persecuted; the passionate realisation in his person of Christ crucified and risen; the transforming effect of his evangel; this is a miracle, because in this evangelic experience God meets with a man in a way which makes other men through all generations meet with Him. The writer of the Fourth Gospel is a miracle, for in his personality Jesus is presented to all ages as the Way, the Truth and the Life. The same may be said of the writers of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse. Indeed the meaning of the canon of the New Testament is that it is a collection of the writings of those who, through knowledge of Jesus, or faith in Him, have this miraculous power of communication.

It will be seen then that the Bible is full of miracles, authentic and indisputable miracles, the greatest kind of miracles, viz., the personalities in which the super-human Being comes into contact, communion, and communication with men.

But when this point is established—and it is so obvious, that, however we may cavil at the God who thus reveals Himself, it is not possible to deny the reality of these persons, nor the justice of calling them miracles; nay, the more unbelievers reject them as

incredible, the more miraculous they are proved to be—the authenticity of miraculous stories occurring in the Bible becomes secondary: they may be handled with perfect freedom, and accepted solely on the evidence. These stories occur in strata, and are to be regarded with varying degrees of certitude according to the strata in which they occur. The story of the Creation, the Fall of Man, the Deluge, are not history; that is to say, they are not the work of contemporaries or based upon collated documents. There is no critical interest at work in them. Their interest is purely religious. The beautiful stories of the Patriarchs are not history either. Rich as they are in spiritual teaching and revelation, they do not profess to be biographies. The tales of ancestors, treasured up and repeated from generation to generation, are miraculous when they convey the sense of God, and the truth of God; but particular miracles occurring in them do not, and cannot, offer any evidence which compels belief.

The miracles of the Exodus are historically vouched, if Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. But when the Books of Moses are shown to be works of a later date, incorporating the traditional story of the events and of the legislature, the miracles must be treated just as we treat such stories in other narratives removed by a great distance of time from the events recorded. No miracle in the Pentateuch is so wonderful as the man Moses himself, his work, his legislation, his power to stamp his faith on his people for ever. If the miracles in the Pentateuch are no longer matter of faith, by believing or disbelieving which we

are saved or lost, the later view of them is not based on the ground that they are incredible, but only on the fact that they are not historically certified.

The group of miracles which attach to the mission of Elijah and Elisha must rest on contemporary records; they occur in historical books, which rest on documentary foundations. That Elijah witnessed for God by a series of acts which carried crushing conviction to his time, may be considered indisputable. No person in history is more real or certain than he, as Wellhausen showed in his famous "Prolegomena." If then we hesitate to impose faith in the miracles recorded as a *sine qua non* of Christian belief, it is only because the duplicate story of Elisha, and the style of the Elijah narrative, irresistibly suggest the saga of popular wonder. Everything shows that Elijah was great and his message was real; but that greatness throws a mist of legendary glory about the details, which defies a critical analysis.

"It was never intended," says Professor Sanday, "that we should take literally such things as Jonah and the whale or the celestial journeys of Ezekiel. That these things should have been taken literally at different periods in the history of the Church does not affect the matter; because from the first the stress lay upon the moral lesson conveyed and not upon the reality of the occurrences as history."[1]

Much the same remark may be made about the Book of Daniel. Only a reader blinded by dogmatic prejudice could take the stories, composed to illustrate trust

[1] "The Life of Christ in Recent Research," p. 212.

in God and His power to save, for actual occurrences in history.

On the other hand, the miraculous events in the autograph works of the prophets, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the rest, have the strongest testimony which can be given to any facts, the witness of contemporaries and eye-witnesses.

In the New Testament the same kind of certitude attaches to the miracles which St. Paul was conscious of performing. His works of healing, the visions which gave him support or brought him the truth, the *charismata* which were manifested in his churches, are precisely as proved as the miracles, very similar in character, which occur in the matter-of-fact journal of John Wesley.

Sir W. M. Ramsay has given us strong reasons for believing that the miracles of the Acts of the Apostles rest on the same sure foundation. The "we-narratives" show that Luke—that he was the author is more and more allowed—was on the spot and witnessed, for example, the miracles wrought in Melita. And this first-hand testimony in parts gives a measure of assurance for those events at which Luke had not been present, twelve or twenty years before.

The miracles of the New Testament are only proved by direct eye-witnesses, if we can be sure of Matthew's part in the first Gospel and of John's authorship of the fourth. With the uncertainty which still attaches to these points we should not say that the miracles of our Lord are *historically* established. He, Himself the great miracle, is as sure as records can make Him, and,

indeed, much surer, for His reality and work rest on a continuous and present experience. But no wise apologist, aware of the nature of evidence and of the evidence of Christianity, would identify the faith in Jesus with belief in the miracles recorded in the Gospels. A devout and earnest Christian like Dr. Abbott, seeing no difficulty in believing in miracles if properly evidenced, does not accept the miracles of the Gospels. In the future there will be multitudes in the same position. Christ is placed beyond dispute, because no ingenuity of man could have painted the picture of a person at once human and superhuman, which emerges from all the four Gospels. But the unconscious correctness in tracing the lineaments of the Son of Man does not and cannot guarantee the correctness of every event handed down in the tradition of His life. Those who, like myself, believe in the miracles of the Gospels, will in the future more and more do so on the ground of a subtle internal evidence. The miracles of Jesus stand at a strange distance from the thaumaturgics of prophets and saints and religious founders in general. The miracles, childish and useless, in the Apocryphal Gospels, the miracles attributed to Apollonius of Tyana, the counter-Christ of the second century, and, above all, the puerile miracles which abound in hagiography, serve to throw the miracles of Jesus into startling contrast. How would legend picture, or tradition transmit, wonders so unlike those which the popular mind demands or feigns? His miracles are mostly acts of mercy, to heal the sick, or to feed the hungry, or to comfort the distressed. Without exception they are

symbolical of deep spiritual truths. His economy of miracles, and his great reserve in advancing them as signs, or proofs of His mission, are very surprising, and certainly do not suggest the creation of fancy or design. He worked miracles of love. He constrained Nature into an evidence of the Divine beneficence and power. Out of His miracles as such, and taken by themselves, you can construct a gospel. Nothing of this kind can be said about the miracles attributed even to the Christian saints. Francis of Assisi, for instance, would be incomparably greater if all the miracles were struck out of the *Fioretti*. But the miracles of Jesus precisely harmonise with Him. They have, with one or two exceptions, the most natural air. Being such an one as He is, and is shown to be in the whole narrative, it seems inevitable that He would heal as well as teach, that He would feed as well as comfort, that He would exercise superhuman power over natural things, and that He would break the bars of Death.

But it will be seen, that in this view the miracles take a reverse position to that which they once held. At the time they authenticated Him to rather dull eyes and sluggish hearts; now He authenticates them. At first they called attention to the unique personality that was among men. Now that that unique personality is above question, we take the miracles as a not unnatural concomitant of them. We do not believe in Him on their account; we believe in Him on His own; but on His account we may believe in them. What has been said about the miracles of Jesus holds also of those miracles which are involved in the Incarnation, the Virgin-birth,

and the Resurrection. No evidence could establish these miracles if they were recorded about an ordinary person; but, on the other hand, slight evidence may establish them if the Person in question is so extraordinary that an unusual entrance and exit are congruous with such a life. Let anyone quietly consider what is implied by such a character as Jesus Christ, sinless and saving from sin, dependent on God and mirroring God, not only setting the example of an ideal human life, but supplying an impulse and a potency to every believer to realise such a life. The more the fact of Jesus is conceived as a concrete reality, entering into history and working through it, the more credible will it seem that He was not, and could not have been, "holden of death," and that His birth should have been by the direct operation of God rather than by the ordinary course of human generation. To many, perhaps most, believing minds that probability grows to a certainty; not only do the Gospel stories of the birth and of the Resurrection seem sufficient evidence, but, even if they were wanting, internal probability would establish the facts. The earliest Gospel, Mark, had no story of the Resurrection, for the closing passage, xvi. 9-19, is admittedly from another hand. If we had only that original Gospel, and no other, the experience and testimony of Paul in his authentic letters would be a sufficient proof of the Resurrection. The Gospel was from the first the announcement of a Risen Lord, the preaching of "Jesus and the resurrection." If our belief in the Resurrection does not depend on the narratives in Matthew, Luke, and John, it cannot

be shaken by the very natural divergences of these accounts. The particular versions of an extraordinary event may be true or false, or more or less true, and yet the event may be certain beyond all possibility of cavil. That Christ rose from the dead, and was seen by the disciples, and convinced them of His resurrection, life, and spiritual presence, is a fact as sure as anything can be in this world. But that does not require or demand that the disjointed stories of all that accompanied the rising on that third day should be correct.

The Virgin-birth is not accredited with the overwhelming and substantial evidence of the Resurrection. How could it be? What possible evidence could convince a determined denier of such an event? If historical documents attempted to prove in detail that Joseph was not the actual father of Jesus, but that the child was produced entirely by the Holy Ghost, the documents would be more curious than convincing. We have here a fact which from the nature of the case could not be proved to later generations. Accordingly Peter and John and Paul take the greatest pains not to rest their Gospel upon it, or to allow their hearers to confuse the certainty of Christ's divinity with so inscrutable a cause as the mode of His birth. The absolute silence of these greatest witnesses on the subject is the clearest guidance for putting the belief in the Virgin-birth in its right place. But, on the other hand, it is no reason for denying or even for questioning it.

In the way of historical evidence no authority could be

better than Luke's. He is acknowledged to be among the most trustworthy of ancient historians. His assertion that he had carefully enquired, and learnt the facts from eye-witnesses, gives a value to all that he records, which cannot reasonably be discredited. The tradition which makes him a physician and a personal friend of Mary's is quite probable: in both capacities he would have exceptional means of estimating the mode of the Lord's birth. The evidence of the first Gospel is not so substantiated. But if the miracle of the Virgin-birth is given on the authority of Luke, it is of course supported by the testimony of Matthew, an earlier document.

The credibility of the miracle however does not rest on documentary evidence, but on the nature of Jesus. If it is reasonable to suppose that a Man, who stands clean outside the common category of men, has a different origin from ordinary men; if on other grounds Jesus is perceived to be a God-man, a revelation of God in man, for the purpose of saving men from their sins and bringing them to God, reason would demand that His difference from men should be shown in the nature of His birth, while at the same time His identity with men should be maintained. It is difficult to imagine how this logical necessity of the situation could be more finely and delicately met, than by the narratives, so exquisite in tone and colour and feeling, with which the first and the third Gospels open.

The miracles of the Incarnation, therefore, like the miracles of Jesus Himself, are perfectly congruous with His character and His work. Superhuman they

admittedly are, because the whole object of Jesus, as God-man, is to raise humanity above itself to His own ideal level; but they cannot be called supernatural, for Jesus of Nazareth is a fact in nature, and being what He is, the Son of Man and the Son of God, it is in the highest degree natural that He should be born of the Holy Ghost, and that He should break the bonds of death.

But another line of argument remains to be developed. It was the peculiarity of Jesus to slight His miracles, and to teach His followers that they should do greater things than He did. It was as if He opened to men a boundless prospect of higher activity, and Himself only led the way. The surest evidence of the miracles of Jesus is therefore found in the reproduction of them by faith in Him. We may say, that while for evidential purposes at the time many miracles were useful, for us in later times only those are of value which come under the category of "Greater works shall ye do, because I go to my Father." The miracles of healing and of saving are for this reason of peculiar value. The miracles of direct control over inanimate forces, like the feeding of the multitude, the calming of the storm, the walking on the sea, the withering of the fig tree, are only of value in so far as they encourage a heroic strength in prayer, and the conviction that all these uncontrollable forces are under the control of a living and loving God, who hears and answers prayer.

The miracles of raising the dead combine the two kinds; in these cases the healing is the direct exercise of the creative power that brings us into being. It is

to be noted that only the just-dead are raised; the spirit which has recently left the body is recalled. Jesus does not encourage us to expect the restoration to life of the long-dead; though in His transfiguration a light was shed on the fact that they live in another and a better sphere. These miracles, therefore, are a direct encouragement never to despair, even when all the signs of death have appeared. God can still bring the dead to life in answer to prayer and will do it, if it be wise and good.

"Christian Science" has done a great service in recalling to us the integral part which healing plays in the original Gospel. Jesus always sends us to preach the glad tidings and to heal diseases. When along the lines of faith in Him we endeavour to heal disease, and even to recall those who are given over to death by the doctor, we strike on a remarkable vindication of the miracles of our Lord. And even in the control of inanimate forces without us, the power of prayer is so amazing—and carries so much farther than minds numbed by physical science conceive—that we should do well to expunge the word "impossibility" from our vocabulary, and fearlessly "*in everything* with prayer and supplication to make our requests known unto God." The life of prayer is lived in an atmosphere of miracles, and in it the miracles of Jesus become certain, because in a way they are always being repeated.

Let me quote an instance from the mission field, which, though not what is called miraculous, illustrates the whole subject of miracles in and out of the Bible. Dr. Arthur Peill, a medical missionary of the L.M.S.

in China, won the regard and love of the people by his devotion and skill and faith. When in the year 1906 he was carried off by disease, worn out with his untiring labours, the people of 'Tsang Chiou were deeply moved, and the funeral was most affecting. On this occasion a native, named Yü, recited a poem which he had composed; in it occurred the words:

"For him ten thousand miles was nought, if he could bring blessing to 'Tsang Chiou. Many buildings he erected. *He brought the dead to life* and clothed dry bones with flesh."

The phrase "he brought the dead to life," was not a poetical licence. Once in the middle of the night he was called up to see a man who had just died of diphtheria in the hospital inn. He found the man dead; the heart's action had ceased for some time. Rapid tracheotomy and artificial respiration restored him to life. Dr. Arthur Peill raised the dead.

The science of medicine and surgery is Christian Science, though it is now exercised by many who have no Christian faith. But in the hands of a Christian doctor, especially in heathen countries, it works miracles which produce the same effect as that produced by the miracles of Christ.

Prayer is always working miracles. Prayer is itself a miracle, for, to revert to the definition of miracles as events which make us aware of God, all persistent and believing prayer has this result. Prayer in the name of Jesus is prayer which rests upon a living faith in Him as the revelation of God, the Way, the Truth and the Life. In such prayer "we have the things that we ask for." It is nothing to the purpose to say that we

also ask for things which are not given. The miracle would lose its edge if the asking and giving became ordinary and automatic like the beating of the heart. The point is, that again and again, indeed habitually, we ask for things which are entirely beyond our own control, in the name of Jesus. In distress we cry for material relief; it comes from unexpected quarters. In sickness we ask for health; and we see a cure effected which amazes the doctors. We ask for the alteration of the character and conduct of those in whom we are interested; and in surprising ways the petition is answered. All religious work, so far as it is truly religious, is done by prayer. We know that we are powerless, but power comes. We are conscious of not having influence over people, but the influence is exercised. The work of God goes on in the world always related to the conscious souls of those who pray.

True, the outward observer sees nothing of this. The whole miraculous life of the Spirit goes on in the ordinary nexus of material causes and effects. It is useless to dwell upon the divine facts which, numbed by custom, he cannot recognise, but to those who are living the life of prayer the miracle is evident enough and indisputable. And, therefore, the real evidence of miracles is found by living the life of prayer. You too can work miracles in this way, you can see for yourself the obstinate facts of the world alter and dissolve. In the striking figure of our blessed Lord, you can say unto the mountain "Be thou removed and cast into the depths of the sea," and it will be done. All things are possible to him that believeth.

The man of science, observing the succession of cause and effect in what he calls nature, and allowing his own spiritual activity to lie dormant, perhaps to become atrophied, may be incredulous of the will and the intelligence which are at work in, and even produce, the very uniformities which he is examining. But let him begin to pray, to exercise his own religious faculty; let him, just as he brings his will and intelligence to investigate "nature," bring his will and intelligence to test that other part of nature which he has ignored—the religious part; and quickly he too, like the saints in all ages, discovers the amazing power which is latent in him. He finds that he can affect other minds, even at a distance, that even physical forces are adjusted and directed at the instance of his prayer; and as he recognises the miraculous in himself, he can understand it in the Bible, and more particularly in Christ.

VIII

THE CHANGED UNIVERSE

WHEN the Bible was written, even its latest parts, and when the formularies of our religion were formed and stereotyped, the world was regarded in a way which has now by the advance of science become for ever inconceivable. The universe was, naturally enough, assumed to be as it *appears* to us. The earth firm on its foundations was the centre, the firmament above was an inverted cup, in the concave of which were fixed the heavenly bodies. Those lights of the day and the night were regarded as appointed for the purpose of illuminating and warming the earth. Man was the supreme object of the earth's existence, and it was a habitation arranged for his convenience. "Above" and "below" were perfectly intelligible terms. Above the firmament, in the region of the farthest planet, sat and ruled the gods or God; below the surface of the earth, dimly suggested by profound caverns, or by volcanic eruptions, was the place of darkness or of fire. In this compassable system there was little difficulty in imagining God "coming down" to the earth, or Christ ascending up into heaven. Hell was the dark under-world, which Christ visited before His ascension. Christ will come again in the clouds of heaven and the saints will be caught up to meet Him

in the air. The whole scenery and apparatus of religious ideas were thus phenomenal. The *naïveté* of it all continues to be quaint and fascinating. Language still retains it in remembrance and use.

But the whole framework of the picture is shattered, and when we employ the words which were suggested by it, we are conscious that it is only an accommodation. We say the sun rises and sets, but every modern child knows that the phrase refers only to appearance, and that in reality the illusion is only produced by the earth revolving on its axis. We talk of looking up into heaven, or even of going up there ourselves; but every one knows that the eye looking up is not turned in the same direction for two successive seconds; that "up" in the course of twenty-four hours would mean the whole periphery of space. If our ordinary language is thus an accommodation, still more is our religious language, in which our creeds are expressed, felt to be merely symbolical; while we continue to use the same phrases, we feel uneasily that the whole inner content has changed.

Even before Copernicus altered the view of the universe, men were occasionally troubled with the doubt whether man after all was as central and as important as had been assumed. "What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?" was the sceptical enquiry of a genuine piety. Job finds the comfort for his sorrows and the silencing of his questions in the mere wonder and glory of visible things which make man look small and insignificant. But the stupendous revelation of the

universe, which science is making familiar to us all, seems to convict of presumption the tiny emmet, man, on this infinitesimal planet, who assumed that he and his affairs were the supreme interest of the universe.

Even in the beginning of the fourteenth century, the wise poet who held in his disciplined brain all the science and theology of his time, could in perfect good faith represent the Inferno as the earth's centre; the purgatorial mount as rising from the antipodes, its summit piercing those concentric concavities in which the sun, moon and planets moved; and Paradise dominant over all. Dante's Cosmos represents the science of his time; it is not, as it seems to us, a free creation of the fancy, the *mise en scène* of his spiritual drama. No, such a universe was in Dante's view actually there; in the midst of it he lived; to its heights he hoped, out of its depths, to climb.

But the days of Copernicus were at hand. And the universe of Dante became a quaint poet's dream. What a shattering blow comes to a religion bound up with a cosmogony, when science changes the whole conception of the world! What a task is set to the real teachers of the religion, to disentangle it from the discredited cosmogony, to reconcile it to a new cosmogony, or better still, to make it independent for ever of all cosmogonies!

Our study of the question, what the Bible is, should make it easy for us to recognise that the view of the universe presented in it lays no claim to finality and infallibility. I remember meeting a man, an engineer who had made the railways in Spain, who

brusquely denied the Copernican system, on the authority of the Bible. He showed to me, with the aid of a plate, how the earth is flat, how the sun revolves round it, how the belief in antipodes is an illusion. Now if the reasoning of astronomers can be upset, and the splendid conception of the universe which they have given to us, as its "flaming walls" recede, can be shown to be only a fiction, that must be done on scientific and not on Biblical grounds. The Biblical view of the universe is a pre-scientific view. If it were treated as divine revelation it would preclude all scientific enquiry, for even the most elementary use of a telescope modifies the Bible view, and any careful and reasonable observation of facts renders its language on cosmic phenomena misleading.

If in Scripture we read that the stars will be shaken from heaven and fall to the earth, we know that the language is only that of appearance. Even the planets of our own solar system could not fall on the earth, for many of them are vastly greater than the earth itself. And the stars? The idea of these innumerable solar systems, most of them far greater than our own, falling on to this tiny planet, becomes of course impossible. We must stretch our minds to form a notion of the distance of even our nearest neighbour in the stellar heavens. Language and numbers do not suffice to convey the fact. Let us suppose a mustard seed lying on the ground, and, at the distance of forty yards, an apple. The two objects represent the relative sizes of the earth and the sun. But suppose this little solar system of the apple and the revolving seeds to lie on

the field in an English county, the nearest fixed star, calculated on the same scale, would be another apple lying in the centre of Pennsylvania. This is the nearest of the solar systems. The light of Alpha Centauri can reach us in three years and a half, but other stars are so distant that their light has taken many centuries to reach us. For aught we know there are some so distant in the depths of space that their light is on the way to us and has not reached us yet.

These are only words. The human mind can form no real conception of these magnitudes and distances. When we are told that in the little net of fireflies which we call the Pleiades, there are about four hundred solar systems, many of them inconceivably larger than our own, we accept the statement of science—we cannot be said to *believe* it, for it is incredible. The faith of science presents us with a universe which eludes us by its unimaginable magnitude, and renders the phenomenal language of the Bible and of the creeds quite out of date, the statement not of facts, but of appearances. We live in a universe changed since the Bible was written.

Now the problem is, how to adjust our religious faith to this changed universe, how to read the religious truths as true supposing we substitute for the popular language about the world the exact language of science.

Before grappling with the problem, it is well to notice Dr. Alfred Wallace's book, "Man's Place in the Universe." In that book the distinguished man of

science maintains a most interesting argument to show that our solar system is the actual centre of the sidereal system. He argues that the universe, though so vast, is not infinite. Through the gaps in the Milky Way, which like a belt encompasses the whole, we look into dark and starless depths. Our solar system is in the centre; and in that system he believes that our planet is the only possible abode of life. And of course we have no proof whatever that any other solar system is inhabited at all.

If Dr. Wallace's arguments were substantiated we should find that the Bible view of man's place in nature is quite correct. Admitting the change in the view of the universe which science has made, the Biblical view of man we might accept. God's interest in the tiny planet arises from the fact that it is the scene of His one experiment of this kind. Here is the nursery of the moral, intellectual, spiritual life of the whole. Here God is working out His scheme of self-realisation in a world of finite spirits. Here the universe blossoms in intelligent beings who can rise to the companionship and sonship of God. In a spot of the universe so central and so significant, the Incarnation is not only intelligible, but necessary. God's self-realisation must come in a Person, if the race is to realise its possibilities. If the race has fallen and missed the mark, it must be restored, because there are not other worlds to fill the place, if this be lost; there are not other denizens of eternity or potential sons of God, if God loses this His human family.

This argument of Dr. Alfred Wallace, though it

may be contested, is well worth recapitulating and considering, because it reminds us of the absolute impossibility of disproving the anthropocentric position. However vast or infinite the universe may be, this globe must to itself be the centre of the whole. In vain we try to people other worlds, even the planets of our own system. The old Greek saw still holds: "Man is the measure." Our view of life and conduct cannot therefore be affected by these cosmic researches. Neither the telescope nor the microscope can direct our feet in the path between two infinites. Science would do us a disservice, from which Dr. Wallace seeks to deliver us, by frightening us with our insignificance. The unveiled magnitude and complexity of the universe may easily paralyse us. The sight of Pan in the old mythology unbalanced the mind of man. The panic produced by the new Pan, the vision of an infinite universe, might be more deranging still.

But Dr. Wallace's argument is not a sufficient support for faith. Faith must never rest on speculation which is liable to disproof. And the only real answer to the cosmological difficulty is to separate religion entirely from cosmic facts, and to find the foundation in realities which are liable to no change from the progress of discovery.

Tennyson endeavoured, not unsuccessfully, to help his generation to reach the securer position. No one felt more keenly the change produced in religious thought by evolutionary modes of conceiving the universe. But on the other hand he had a rare faculty of realising the significance of personality, and he

encouraged us to set the soul over against even the mastering size and movement of cosmic things :

> " For though the giant ages heave the hill,
> And break the shore,
> And evermore
> Make and break and work their will ;
>
> " Though world on world in myriad myriads roll
> Round us, each with different powers,
> And other forms of life than ours,
> What know we greater than the soul ? "

The later poems of the great laureate, if not quite so musical as the poems of his golden period, are more helpful in their teaching. He succeeds in assimilating the evolutionary ideas; he realises his position in the series of changes, by which the low forms of life rise to the human and to the divine. In the vast cosmic process he is undismayed, because he is conscious of approximating to God, and Christ takes a wonderful and unexpected place in the process. He recovers himself, as against the shock of the new science, by recovering Christ as the power of the old religion and the new. The significance of this later work of the great poet of the nineteenth century deserves a fuller recognition :

> " I have climbed to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the past,
> Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire ;
> But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is quiet at last
> As he stands on the heights of his life, with a glimpse of a height that is higher."

Now it is in psychology that our time must find, and is already finding, the answer to the difficulties of cosmology. For practical purposes we are not concerned with the infinitude of the universe. God, as an

Infinite, is a necessary datum of thought, but not a factor of experience. With God as filling space and governing remote systems we are not concerned; we are only concerned with God in contact with our own field of experience and life. If we are assured by conclusive reasoning that our planet was evolved out of star-dust, and our own life was evolved out of lower forms, we need not hesitate to accept the conclusion and to include in our conception of God the power which initiated and conducted that evolution; but the Mighty Being of the evolutionary process is not religiously accessible to us. His ways may be partially known, but they are past finding out. We cannot know the Almighty to perfection. It is only God revealed in human life that can be personally accessible to human souls. It is God in contact with our own souls or with the souls of others, God as a reality of inward experience, that determines and must determine our character, our conduct, our belief in life or in death or in a life after death. The cosmic facts are irrelevant, except in so far as they are brought into the experience of the soul. For man, the soul stands and must always stand over against them as intrinsically greater than they.

This is no self-glorification on the part of man; it is the necessary recognition of what he is, and the condition of all fruitful activity, whether of thought or action. The intelligence which apprehends the universe—and except as apprehended, the vast quantum is not a subject of thought at all—is necessarily greater than it. Greater is that which contains than that which is

contained. Granted that the intelligence cannot solve this enigma wholly, yet to perceive it, to discuss it, to offer tentative solutions, places the intelligence in a position of superiority to the enigma itself. The thought, that piercing through phenomena, apprehends and constructs a world of reality, stands in the midst of its discovery, including it and above it. Thus psychology gives man a position more central than that which he had in the Garden of Eden.

In the light of evolution man is the crown of the process, so far as it has gone. If he has lost the central position given to him by the Ptolemaic astronomy, he has gained a central position of another kind. Personality is the highest that has been reached, apparently the highest that can be reached; and in the inference from his own personality to the personality of the Being who produced all things, he not only finds a God that is above all things produced, but he recognises in himself a kinship to that God.

This recovery of man through psychological processes, following in so remarkable a way on the disturbing effect of evolutionary science, is singularly reassuring. It affords a securer foundation than any theory of the cosmos can offer; it also suggests irresistibly the Divine Mind that is at work in the succession and development of human ideas.

The shifting of interest from the cosmological to the psychological plane gives peculiar weight to the argument from the consciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God in Christ, God seen in the mirror of the mind of Jesus, God working in His activity, in His life and

in His death, that is the content of the Christian revelation. In the future we shall probably lay the whole stress of the evidence for Christianity on this one point. We shall cease to speak as if we knew *everything*, as if the Bible had revealed to us all that is said or implied within its covers, or as if the Church had been empowered to declare the truth on matters scientific, historical, or even theological. We shall confine ourselves to the one point: "This one thing we know, that in the person of Jesus we find God." There we see a human mind in serene and unclouded communion with God; an exquisite dependence on God resulting in a full expression of God's will. There we see God's thought of man, God's love for man, God's judgement on his sin, God's way of delivering him from sin. We shall fix our whole attention on believing in Christ; and believing in Him we shall be admitted to the Christian experience of the cleansed heart, of the love of God shed abroad, of the life lived in holy obedience and loving service. This Christian experience will be, as it has ever been, Christianity, the goal that is aimed at, the evidence of the truth, when it is reached.

This central fact secured, we may regard with composure the complete change of the circumstances and scenery in which the Christian redemption is set. Perhaps eventually we shall even alter our terminology, and read into most Scripture phrases the kind of interpretation that we involuntarily give to the statement, that the world was made in six days, or to the current speech about the sun setting and rising.

A religion mediated through the personality of Jesus

must live and work entirely within our own personality. Such questions as the origin and nature of the universe, or the locale of heaven and hell, or the state of the soul before birth or after death, do not belong to the sphere of religion, as understood in Christianity. They are curious discussions, which waste time and lead the soul astray. The account, for instance, which Herbert Spencer or Ernst Haeckel, gives of the universe as the subject of evolution, is of no *religious* interest to man. How the world came to be his habitation, and how he himself came to inhabit it, is a matter of curiosity, but not of religion. If he sprang out of the dust, if he is a developed amœba, if he is now a physical organism closely related to the anthropoid apes, he has no interest in affirming or denying the fact. A man who justified a bestial or indecent act by saying that his descent was from the beasts would be clapped into prison, and justly punished. In the same way, a man who repudiates morality and religion because they have resulted from a long development, is condemned in just the same mulct as if he repudiated them on the ground of being immoral and irreligious. In other words, practically speaking, these cosmical facts or theories are not important. We have to live, to grow, to form our characters, to do our part in the world's work, as moral and religious beings. The truths of morality and religion may be only relative or provisional, but by them we have to live.

It would no doubt be better now to interpret more closely such phrases as heaven and hell, and to use sparingly notes of locality in reference to them. Heaven

is above and hell is beneath, in a scale of spiritual values, but not in any physical sense. To go to heaven means to exchange the present mode of being in space and time for that spiritual mode of being which we know from the personality of Christ, from His resurrection, and the manifestations which he gave of Himself. To say that heaven is "up there" has no meaning. The only relevant paraphrase for it is "to be with Christ." The assured hope with which a Christian dies, and the blessed visions which often come to a Christian *in articulo mortis*, give us some conception of the glory and the rapture, and the soul-sufficing rest of heaven. But a spiritual state cannot be described as above the clouds or in a distant planet. It is quite probable that heaven lies all about us, with closed gates. To go to hell, on the other hand, means that the soul immersed in things of time and sense, and without Christ, breaks from all the familiar surroundings, and enters unclothed a spiritual region without light, or hope, or joy. It is meaningless to speak of hell as being beneath; the antipodes are beneath. Equally meaningless would it be to place it in the distant planets, in "chilling regions of thick-ribbed ice," or in the planets which are scorched by the too contiguous sun. It is far more probable that hell is on the earth; we look into it whenever we come into contact with a thoroughly bad person. The slave-raiding of darkest Africa, or the government of the Congo State, the torturing desires and satieties of lust, the delirious dreams of a drunkard, the isolation of a haughty and loveless soul, are hell.

Nothing is more futile than to speculate on prenatal conditions, on reincarnations, or on the state of the soul after death. Such speculations are morbid; they often arise out of mental disease, still oftener they lead to it. No facts are ascertainable on these subjects. And airy structures built on fancy are fallacious while they stand, and ruinous in their fall. In nothing has Catholicism been so disastrous to the life of man as in its reckless constructions of dogmatic eschatology, which equally defy proof and refutation. Purgatory is presented with the confidence of a geographical discovery. The power to shorten its duration is claimed by the Pope and sold for money or penance. To call this irreligious is far too mild a term. It is substituting dreams of the madhouse for truth, and the result appears in the tyrannical power of the clergy, and the degraded superstition of the people.

But confining our thought to the reality of religion, viz., God revealed in Christ, and the life regenerate and holy which results from belief in Christ, can we say that religion in this solid and fundamental sense is affected by the enlarged view of the universe which science has forced upon us? No, we cannot. Quite the contrary, when the central reality is grasped and established, when the personal relation with God is secure by faith in Christ Jesus, we shall find the universe as revealed by science more magnificent, more glorious, more worthy of God, than the crude and childlike view of it which is assumed in Scripture.

Let us attempt an illustration. Suppose one of the green summer flies, which lives its brief life and enjoys

the sun on the leaf of a sycamore, travelling along the veins or the rims of the leaf, flying a few inches, falling from the tree to the ground, laying its eggs, and dying; suppose, I say, this tiny organism to become aware of the whole garden, or even of a whole park. Its little brain is bewildered for a moment by the incredible discovery. It had thought of God as the marvellous maker of the leaf and of the sycamore; it had worshipped Him for contriving His small world with such ingenuity. And now behold there are more sycamores than one, there are other trees besides sycamores; the green grass rolls away and is lost in a distant horizon. At first his feelings are so bewildered that he thinks there can be no God. A God who made a leaf or a sycamore he could partly understand, but a God who made a hundred sycamores and other trees beside is beyond his utmost stretch of thought. But gradually he accustoms himself to the new idea. And then the God of the garden or of the park seems more worshipful than the God of his tree. His little soul expands in the discovery of the larger God. . . . We must not be surprised that man, accustomed to regard his tiny globe as the chief of the works of God, and thinking of God for millenniums as the artificer of the little world which occupies his vision, has been staggered by the discovery that God's universe is to the world as the world itself is to a grain of dust. His anthropomorphism had limited him. He had trained himself to conceive a God large enough for the known effects, but the revelation of the vaster effects broke up his limited God like an old idol from

the South Seas. His first resort in the shock was atheism. But in atheism he cannot rest; his own soul forbids it; the souls of others who have experienced God testify against it; above all the soul of Jesus, the Son of God, renders it unnecessary. Recovering his belief in God, he begins to find that his discoveries have enlarged his idea of God, and that the new idea resolves many difficulties which beset the old.

The God who works in the universe by evolution is a greater, a more wonderful, a more beneficent God, than a God who works by creative *fiats*. The provision and the design and the orderly development are so vast as to baffle our field of vision, but they mightily invigorate the mind. Working by evolution, by æonian laws which do not admit of hurry or brook delay, God will tolerate many incidents which are to us inexplicable. His apparent indifference, the slow growth, the waste by the way, are explained.

If Christ was God's Son, manifested for our redemption, why so long before He came? If the end of the plan is to be perfection, why this delay? If God is love, why does He let the individual suffer? If He created all, why cannot He heal, rescue, deliver, every one from every incident or accident or disease of the world?

And the answer to these and to all similar questions is found in the greatness, in the infinitude of God. The God of evolution works on lines too great for us to follow Him in detail. The time involved mocks our little span. Only the vastness of the design assures its accomplishment, and the manifestation of

the wisdom and the love silences our misgivings where we cannot understand.

'Οψὲ μύλοι ἀλέουσι θεοί, ἀλέουσι δὲ λεπτά.

And holding fast the clue of Jesus, centreing life in Him and in His obedience, we may become greatly at home in this extended universe, persuaded of the kindly intention and ultimate good of it all. The sorrow and the pain are clearly incidental, and not the end. The end is very good; no one can dwell habitually with Jesus, watching the Heavenly Father, who sends His sun and showers to the human family impartially, without conceiving an assured hope for the whole, and even for the individual.

The Power which produced and orders this universe will not be baffled. He who strikes off human souls like the sparks from the anvil, prolific and untiring, can hold them in being, and carry them through death. There is room in the fathomless universe for all souls, which, says God, are His. The very grandeur and splendour of the mighty scheme are reassuring. We are not dealing with a man, good but limited, with a Hercules smiting the wrongs of the earth, perishing at length in its fires, or with a Prometheus, the beneficent helper of men, bound at last to the Caucasus, with an eagle gnawing his liver. No, we are dealing with the Infinite Power which makes and sustains the universe, not only the narrow belt of it within our range of vision, but the worlds beyond the telescope, and the infinitesimal perfections revealed by the microscope. The Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ is the Maker of men, the Maker of men is the source and cause of all.

There was a truth, a prophetic truth, in the idea of Professor Clifford, that the substitute for religion in the future would be cosmic emotion, the wonder and delight of an intricate and infinite and beautiful universe. But it was only a half-truth. Cosmic emotion is not a substitute for religion; it is only a widening and deepening of a religious sense acquired in the proper religious way.

The believer in Christ can view the universe with purged eyes and kindling heart. He can be well assured of the wisdom and love that run through it all. He looks forward; the evolution reached a cardinal point with the coming of Christ; it will reach another cardinal point with another coming; it will reach a conclusion, noble and stable and satisfying.

He cannot despair of society, of any nation, however retrograde, nor even of any individual. Braced by the vastness of things, he sees Christ's work in a large light. Certainly He will draw all men unto Him. The backward races, the degraded races, are not beyond His purview. The dead are within His reach. Heaven and hell are dread realities, but they are not final. When the end comes, all authority will be beneath His feet, whose right it is to rule.

And with such cosmic prospects, the individual, in Christ, does not trouble for his own future life. He is not importunate for immortality. His religion does not turn upon the ambiguous future. He believes in Christ, because He is the truth; and he only believes in immortality because he believes in Christ. But he is well

assured about the future for himself, as for the world. Death is not a terror, but a kindly ordinance. If it is a shaded passage, it leads out into the light.

Here, again, Tennyson gave a tuneful voice to the faith establishing itself, after the shock of a wider universe opening on the mind. The verses called "God and the Universe" close, or nearly close, his last volume. The swan sings as it dies.

"Will my tiny spark of being wholly vanish in your depths and heights?
Must my day be dark by reason, O ye heavens, of your boundless nights,
Rush of suns, and roll of systems, and your fiery clash of meteorites?

"Spirit, nearing yon dark portal at the limit of thy human state,
Fear not thou the hidden purpose of that Power which alone is great,
Nor the myriad world, His shadow, nor the silent Opener of the Gate."

IX

HOW TO REGARD PRAYER

The first enquiry should not be, Are prayers heard and answered? but rather, What is Prayer? We have to reckon with a broad fundamental fact, viz., that prayer is an instinct. Scepticism can cast suspicion on it, just as scepticism may question the reality of matter, or the freedom of the will, or the validity of knowledge; but instincts defy scepticism; they always recur. Men pray; they have always prayed; they always will. Men who have no belief in God will in a moment of stress cry "God help me!" or in a moment of devilish anger, "God damn you!" It is vain to attempt to root prayer out of human life. It did not begin with theology; it was not imposed by churches; it was always there. It springs up in human hearts like an irresistible fountain, which may fail in a drouth, but begins again after the rains. If the fountain of prayer were finally dried up, the heart of man would have ceased to be.

Our instincts cannot be explained; still less can they be explained away. It is an instinct which leads us to pray to God, before we know Him, that we may know Him, and after we know Him, because we know Him. That instinct may be crushed, or perverted, but not eradicated. If you demonstrate to a man the futility

of prayer, that will not prevent him praying. If a man has lived for years in the neglect of prayer, that will not prevent him from one day coming to himself and saying: "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned."

Let us define prayer, with our eye on the common New Testament word for it, προσευχή, which means a wish directed towards—what? The object is not at first stated. *Prayer is the psychological act by which the soul seeks and finds contact, conscious contact, or communion, with God.* In the first instance it is not asking for anything, it is not petition; all it seeks is God Himself. When it makes a request, there is always a preface; Let me find Thee, let me know Thee, then I will ask of Thee. Francis of Assisi, we are told, would frequently spend an hour or two in prayer on Monte Alverno, and the only word he would say would be "God," repeated at intervals. That is prayer, bare, elemental, essential prayer.

The soul wants God. An instinct bids it seek Him. It waits for Him, uttering the name, pausing, listening. It begins to be aware of Him, and utters the name in wonder, then in obedience, then in worship. The music is on one chord, but there are great varieties of tone. "God, God, God; how I want Thee! I am hungry for Thee! I would touch Thee!"

Even Paganism has, at its highest, thoroughly understood this. "Prayer is not a means of inducing the gods to change the course of things," we read in the *De Mysteriis Ægyptorum*, "but their own good gift of communion with them, the blessing of the living gods upon their children."

How to Regard Prayer

Prayer is not the monopoly of Christianity, though Christian prayer differs from other prayer by being "in the name of Jesus."

But the definition will not be complete unless it is understood that the contact with God is communion, that is, mutual contact. Prayer is not only the psychological act by which the soul comes into contact with God; it is also the condition of the soul by which God comes into contact with *it*. Prayer is God's opportunity with man. A prayerless man keeps God out. God cannot enter a man's nature unless the man opens the door and asks Him in. That is the sanctity of personality which God always respects, which He made in order to respect; only when the proprietor of the soul rises, opens, and asks God in, can He enter.

If man is only useful, wise, successful, by the operation of God in him and through him, and prayer is the act on man's part by which this operation proceeds, nothing more need be said in order to justify the instinct of prayer. It becomes an obvious duty to follow the instinct, to cultivate the power, to find the right method, the full content, the most effectual exercise, of prayer.

Let us, however, for a moment, push the definition of prayer a little further, so that it may include petitions and intercessions, and those other parts which are sometimes mistaken for the whole.

The psychological act, which we call prayer, implies an inwardness of experience, an introspection, a self-sounding. In exercising it you go down into what is now called the subliminal consciousness. The

consciousness at a given moment is only the cork on the surface which shows where the vast drag-net is submerged. In prayer you enter into the depths. And there, wonderful as it seems, you come into communication with other souls. It is as if on the surface we are divided from men, but in the ocean depths we are united. Telepathic communications pass easily in that subliminal region even to those at a distance. Marconi's discovery has been always anticipated in this wonderful psychical fact. When, therefore, your prayer entertains a person, or a condition, even far away, without any visible communication, you are on the spot. Your succour, or your sympathy, is readily transmitted. Evidences of this truth are easily accumulated, but not easily written. You must explore for yourself, and confer with others, and the truth will be quickly established in your mind. Prayer, being a contact with God, is also a contact with men, and conveys to men all that can be conveyed through God.

"The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy that day. They wondered how.
A ploughman singing at his work had prayed, God help them now.
"Away in foreign lands they wondered how their simple word had power.
At home the Christians, two or three, had met, to pray an hour.
"Yes, we are always wondering, wondering 'how,' because we do not see
Someone, unknown perhaps, and far away, on bended knee."

But the psychological analysis of prayer should only lead us up to this great discovery, that when we really pray, or, let us put it, when we pray in the name of Jesus, the almighty power of God is put into operation

to fulfil the requests. Our laws of nature must include this law, for it is one established as fully and inductively as any other law of nature. It is a fundamental fact of the universe, or, if we prefer to state it in another way, it is the irreversible purpose of Almighty God, that whatever is asked in the name of Jesus shall be done. "In the name of Jesus" means according to the constant linguistic usage of the Bible, "in the person of Jesus." That is to say, when we are in Christ, pardoned and reconciled to God by faith in His sacrifice, and united with Christ, as the branch is in the vine, so that the ideas of Christ come into our minds, and the purposes of Christ excite our desire, just as the sap rises through the trunk and runs through the branches, we pray in His name. Such prayers, being in harmony with the eternal and holy will, are answered.

But it may be said, in that case would it not be more true to say that by prayer we bring ourselves into harmony with the will of God, than to say that we actually alter the course of events? The answer to this question can only come from reflection. No doubt the main object of prayer is to bring ourselves into line, and harmonious line, with the will of God; but the will of God is that our individuality should originate, should be not only an effect but a cause. As a cause acting against God or apart from God it is hurtful to others and destructive to itself. But when it acts with God, it does not cease to be a cause. It contributes. Thus when a single person prays "Thy kingdom come," the kingdom so far comes. When a

praying soul asks for some concrete point in the advance of the kingdom, the power of God is at work to realise that point. That point is that soul's contribution.

Perhaps we may now raise the question of the answers to prayer, and while we may defend the instinct of prayer without laying stress on the answers to prayer, we shall hardly arrive at a true view of prayer unless we see with some clearness the place which answers ought to take in the practice of prayer.

Let us frankly own that many prayers are to all appearance unanswered. Indeed it must be so; for men are asking for opposite and contradictory things. Some prayers are answered, but so doubtfully and indemonstrably that conviction is only carried to a few minds most directly concerned. A few prayers are strikingly and amazingly answered; and yet even these are seldom answered in a way to compel attention.

Unanswered prayers are often as instructive as answered prayers.

For instance, in that severest blow that ever befell Christendom, the Turkish taking of Constantinople, 1453, the Greeks prayed, and trusted in the silly prophecies of the monks. They fought listlessly. When the walls were captured, the praying people took refuge in St. Sophia's; but they were brought out and sold as slaves by the conquerors. The crucifix was carried through the streets with a janissary's cap on it, and the cry, "Behold the God of the Christians."

In a singular way the heirs of that Byzantine

Christianity, the Russians, have experienced a very similar defeat in our own time. Russia went to meet Japan under the auspices of St. Serafino, whose cult was furbished up for the occasion. Never were offered so many prayers—of a kind. When bad news came from the front the streets of Moscow were full of kneeling people, and the icons and the closed silver-bound Testament were carried round with endless genuflexions and incense-burning. But little pagan Japan disposed of the great "Christian" Power, in spite of all the prayers.

In the fall of Constantinople and in the humiliation of Russia the same phenomena are presented; a corrupt government, weakened with bribery and luxury and superstition, resorts to prayer as a bribe to God, hoping to buy victory by the repetition of phrases. And it is in vain. The scourge of Islam or of Japan is prevalent over prayer coupled with iniquity.

This illustrates what has been said about "the name of Jesus." There is a permanent and infrangible moral order. True prayer asks that it may be maintained. But prayer, so-called, which would infringe it, is powerless.

It is most interesting to trace the answer to prayer coming after a delay which seemed to be a denial. Perhaps it is the limitation of our horizon which makes us sceptical. If we could range over the whole order from beginning to end, we might see prayer operating centuries hence, and things accomplished at the long last by souls in the "dark backward and abysm of time."

For instance, Edward VI., in dying, prayed: "Have

mercy on my soul, and save my country from Papistry." No prayer ever seemed so flatly rejected at the moment. His sister Mary ascended the throne, and her consort was Philip II. of Spain. The reaction to Papistry was sudden and irresistible. And yet the prayer was answered by that reaction. Mary's Catholicism and Philip's imperious devotion to Rome made England Protestant. It was necessary that Hooper should die at Gloucester, and that Ridley and Latimer should at Oxford light the candle which should never be put out. From that Marian persecution dates the Protestantism of England. It was not Elizabeth, but Mary, who set the heart of this country against that bastard imperialism masquerading as the Church of Christ. As the holy and devoted servants of Christ, Hooper, Ridley, and Latimer perished in the flames by the policy of Rome, England saw that the Roman system is not Christian, but Antichristian. By the Marian reaction the whole genius of the people, the national greatness, the constitutional progress, were identified with the Reformation. Protestantism became, not only the security for religion, but the only bulwark of liberty. Philip II. brought a great fleet, under the blessing of the Pope, to subdue England. But

> "When lofty Spain came towering up the seas,
> This little stubborn land to daunt and quell,
> The winds of heaven were our auxiliaries,
> And smote her, that she fell."

From 1588 England was as conscious of miraculous deliverance from Rome as Israel was reminiscent of the Exodus. It was Protestantism and the English Bible

which made the Puritan Revolution. And while the Stuarts were always coquetting with Rome, it was by the Protestant Prince of Orange that the final and glorious Revolution was accomplished, which made our modern England, and the world-wide Empire. Rome has gained complete liberty in England; her bishoprics map out the land; her convents and monasteries are more numerous than before the Reformation; her schools and training colleges are supported by public money; because England has no fear of her. England can only become Roman by ceasing to be English. There are many converts to Rome, but they are perverts from England; they lose the national spirit; their sympathies fall away from all that makes England great. The Irish and the French Canadians are the clearest evidence that Papists cannot be English. They are tolerated aliens in a vast Empire which is built up on the Bible, on individual freedom, on the truth of man's direct relation to God, which they as Papists cannot even comprehend.

Thus the dying prayer of the young king is answered in a way which he could not have dreamed. The reaction, which seemed to be the rejection of his petition, was the chief means of fulfilling it.

Many prayers are of this kind. It is as if God had a reluctance, not to answer prayer, but to make the answers too striking or distinct; prayer is not to rest upon an inductive proof that it is answered, but on a much broader and surer foundation. Robert Louis Stevenson, whose recorded prayers are among the treasures of our devotional literature, came to the

conclusion that "no generous prayer is unanswered." But by this he did not mean that everything we ask for in prayer is granted. He was referring to that surer foundation, to which we will now turn our attention.

Prayer is an instinct co-extensive with human nature. It is degraded and superstitious, or enlightened and spiritual, according to the religious ideas of those who pray. A savage propitiating a fetish, or a Catholic peasant beating a wooden image of the virgin, because it has not preserved his crops from blight, represents a very low type of prayer. Jesus in Gethsemane, saying "Thy will be done," represents the highest type of prayer. Prayer in the name of Jesus, if we understand what is meant by that, is the source of true prayer. In saying things about prayer we should refer them to this purest and noblest type, and should remember that the truths stated refer only in a diminished degree to the lower forms. A Buddhist praying by revolving a wheel with prayers written on it; a Moslem rising from a hard bargain to perform his prayers in the shop, and returning to cheat his customer more effectually; a Romanist reciting the endless repetitions of Aves and Paternosters in the Rosary; these gain little good, and do less, by their superstitious exercises. Perhaps the Romanist least of all, because our Lord expressly warned us against vain repetitions, and gave us the simplicity and directness of the Lord's prayer in order to save us from them. The ingenious perversity of Rome uses this very prayer in the Rosary, for the very repetitions which Christ condemns.

I was present once at Mass in a Wicklow village.

The chapel was crowded with the people, high and low. Nothing could be more edifying until one looked into their faces. The priest explained from the altar that it was Sunday, and they must do an extra act of religion, read a pious book, or perform a good deed. But the easiest way to discharge the obligation was to stay for the Rosary, which would only take twenty minutes. This, he explained, consisted of the Lord's prayer, which was the best of prayers, and must be said thoughtfully, not gabbled over, and of the *Hail, Mary*, for when they came to die they would want the blessed Virgin with them, and how could they expect her to come, if they omitted the Rosary. So many Paternosters, then so many Ave Marias, then more Paternosters, and then more Aves, and so on, for twenty minutes. After this edifying exposition the Rosary began. The priest and the acolytes rattled off the prayers at such a rate that no words were audible, and the thing was through in less than a quarter of an hour.

I watched the people as they came out. There was no gleam of light, no trace of worship. Dull, listless, unintelligent, they had done what the priest had told them; but no effort of faith or imagination could expect any benefit from the lifeless, mechanical performance, the more dead and deadening because the words of the Lord's Prayer were thus desecrated, and the simple woman who was our Lord's mother was thus exalted to a place of divinity.

But, with our thought fixed on real prayer, *i.e.*, prayer in the name of Jesus, we may say that the instinct of prayer is justified by these facts of observation: (1) The

effect which prayer has on those who use it; (2) the effect which it has on those for whom prayer is made; (3) the indisputable answers, which cannot be referred to the individual who prays, nor to other human beings, but only to a God who hears and answers.

But these facts, let us note, should be arranged in a pyramidal form. The broad, sure basis is the effect which prayer has on those who habitually pray; the narrowing layers of the pyramid are the observable effects on those for whom we intercede; the apex is composed of those clear, sharp, and indisputable answers to prayer in which (though the instances are only few in each life) God's hand indisputably intervenes, and we know that He has done marvellously for us.

1. Let us illustrate the effect of prayer on the soul by borrowing the words of two modern writers of fiction, the one American, the other English. For the facts of the spiritual life have, for better or worse, come into the common speech of men. The old primness is gone; and a novelist no longer hesitates to preach, or to handle the things of religion.

James Lane Allen, in "The Choir Invisible," speaking of an old face which retains the freshness of Easter lilies, says: "For prayer will in time make the human countenance its own divinest altar; years upon years of fine thoughts, like music shut up within, will vibrate along the nerves of expression until the lines of the living instrument are drawn into correspondence, and the harmony of visible form matches the unheard harmony of the mind."

This exquisite carving of the face of one who is

habitually in prayer cannot be mistaken; it is a sacrament, "the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." The beauty gained in this way survives the flight of youth, and is clearest in old age; nay, after death, the face of a praying soul, in the stillness and the expectation, shines with a light which seems at once to beam out of it and to fall upon it.

Jesus in the act of prayer was transfigured; He became radiant and even his garment glistened. In their degree, all praying souls are so transfigured. The tranquil joy, assured against storm and sorrow; the suggestion of that peace which the world neither gives nor takes away; the rest of the soul in the bosom of God; the sense of the legions of invisible angels at hand; the circumambient atmosphere of another world; these are the marks of those who are exercised in prayer. So Percival saw the eyes of the holy maid praying for the Holy Grail,

> "Beyond my knowing of them beautiful,
> Beyond all knowing of them wonderful,
> Beautiful in the light of holiness."

But even when this outward effect is not yet produced, the inward reality may be already there. And this the English novelist, Mr. A. C. Benson refers to in "Beside Still Waters." The speaker has discovered the effectiveness of a certain kind of prayer: "This was not a mechanical repetition of verbal forms, but a strong and secret uplifting of the heart to the Father of all. There were moments when one seemed baffled and powerless, when one's own strength seemed utterly unequal to the burden; prayer on such occasions did

not necessarily bring a perfect serenity and joy, though there were times when it brought even that; but it brought sufficient strength; it made the difficult, the dreaded thing possible. . . . It seemed to reveal a dim form moving behind the veil of things, which in the moment of entreaty seemed to suspend its progress, to stop, and draw near, to smile."

Whoever has made it a practice to spend certain hours or half-hours in the day alone with God, knows the extraordinary effect produced by the gradual accumulation of experiences, and the settled habit of the soul. Many of those hours seem dry and listless; there is no sign or sound; many of them are burdened and sad with the sense of sin and the weight of sorrow. Only now and then does prayer become so limpid and spontaneous and vocal that one is constrained to write down the words of the illuminated moments. And yet the habit in long years secures a remarkable result. The assured presence of God; the fact of redemption in the Cross; the knowledge of a life hidden with Christ in God; the ready recourse to God in a moment of surprise or danger; the conscious connection between the soul, as a small fact in time and space, with the infinite and eternal God; these become the very atmosphere and meat and drink of the inward life.

Let anyone examine the written prayers of the Masters of Prayer, for example, the familiar book "Great Souls at Prayer," and let him push his enquiries into the lives and the services of those who have lived a life of prayer, and he will admit that this one point is established beyond all dispute, apart from any

particular theories or dogmas of religion: prayer is, of all mental acts or occupations, the most wholesome, the most invigorating, the most powerful and power giving.

2. He who prays much for individuals and keeps a record of intercession has a vast accumulation of evidence, that for affecting others nothing we do is so potent as prayer. The hidden lines of communication running between soul and soul, to which reference was made just now, are insufficiently explored. But telepathy is a convenient name for a fact which every intercessor has frequently experienced. It seems as if something of this kind happens: when you begin to pray, you get quickly on to a plane of being where distance does not count; you are at once by the side of the person you pray for, in the next room or on the other side of the globe. But your influence on the person in that region of experience is much more powerful than it is in the more superficial intercourse of daily life. You reach the soul. And you bring with you co-operant forces. To your amazement you find afterwards that your prayer has brought, miraculously as it seems, comfort and strength; it has stirred the will, at that distance, to act; it has set in motion helpers or directors who come to the aid of the distracted, or the suffering, or the sinful.

I have myself experienced what is recorded of Spurgeon, though I prefer to hint at the fact as it is recorded by him. There came into his vestry a woman who had believed in Christ, but the trouble was the indifference or unbelief of her husband. Spurgeon without a moment's hesitation proposed that

they should pray for him. They knelt down and asked that he might seek Christ and be saved. As they prayed in the vestry, the man was reached in his home. When the woman returned she found her husband seeking salvation.

The long delays in the answer to these prayers for the salvation of others make us hesitate to lay undue stress on this side of prayer. But, on the other hand, the numerous instances of conversion occurring in this way give us a broad basis for belief.

I confess I am sometimes baffled by the apparent failure. But always the surprise of the successes takes hold of me afresh. You get at people through prayer; you bring them all the good you can do them and all the truth you know in that way. Making allowance for all the obstacles and hindrances, which we cannot explain or know, you learn that to help and save people, there is no way like that by the Throne of God, in prayer and supplication.

3. The work of the Kingdom of God shows at every point that it depends on prayer, and that prayer always produces the progress which is made. Needless to say, this prayer must be in the name of Jesus; it must be made by those who are in Jesus, and who therefore derive their thought and inspiration from Him. But when we are brought into line with His desires, and pray for the things which concern His kingdom, experience shows that the things are given, the work is done. Here there is no limit to the requests which must be made except the limit imposed by "the name of Jesus." In the strong figure of Jesus Himself we

may say to the mountain, Be thou removed and cast into the depth of the sea, and it will be done. The Omnipotence of God, like the constant forces of Nature, is steadily at work to do all that is in the mind of Jesus; directly we are in harmony with that mind we launch out on the stream of that Omnipotence.

Every student of missionary literature is familiar with the amazing and miraculous answers to prayer which mark the course of the missionary enterprise. And it is one of the strongest reasons for studying missions systematically, that the study brings us into contact with this miraculous element, which so far from being contrary to the law of Nature, is literally wrought into the whole development of the kingdom of God.

A mere recital of names, or a vague general reference to the facts, will not perhaps carry so much conviction as a single incident accurately examined. For understanding how prayer works, or rather how God works in answer to prayer, let us select a passage from the story of the China Inland Mission, written by Miss Geraldine Guinness. Here is the chapter called "The Coming of the Hundred." In the year 1887 the Council was convinced that the demands of the work in China required one hundred additional missionaries. That the Council were deliberating and acting in the name of Jesus is manifest, for when this great need was recognised, we are told,

"Faith burned brightly in every heart. There and then the hundred were asked and accepted from God in fullest confidence. The Council set to work to arrange to receive them in 1887."

Here was a demand beyond the power of any man or council; to induce a hundred men and women to go out to China, on the precarious allowance which the Mission offers, will be seen to be quite quixotic if we imagine any committee asking for people to do any work on similar terms. How could the right people be reached, or if reached, persuaded to give up home and prospects for this visionary enterprise?

But we read on, and find that the following autumn proved the worth and reality of this faith, and brought the answer to the Council's prayer. Before the year was ended the last detachment of the hundred sailed, and a further party, which included Miss Guinness, was arranged for, that left in January, 1888.

Now to conclude our discussion. Prayer is an instinct so irrepressible that possibly no human being ever lived without ejaculating a prayer. When men give up prayer they do violence to one of the most sacred and persistent impulses of their nature. By a process of rationalising they persuade themselves that the instinct is a delusion, and that the practice is vain. Or by the deadening weight of superstition prayer may be reduced from a living power, to a dead form, an irrational magic, a numbing mechanical exercise.

But if the instinct is allowed fair and free play; if prayer is exercised in the highest form we know, that is, in the faith and spirit of Jesus; certain facts establish themselves in experience, and may be certified by all who will apply the necessary tests. It becomes plain that the habitual practice of this prayer makes and moulds the character to the noblest model with

which we are acquainted; that by this prayer the strongest and most salutary influence can be exerted on others; and finally, that by the order of the Universe and the will of God, petitions made in this kind of prayer are granted, answers are given, sometimes after long delay and in unexpected forms, but answers which by their fitness and completeness and wonder can only be regarded as the action of the God whose most tender designation is, that He hears and answers prayer.

Let me close with an earnest appeal. Never give up praying. Even if faith has faded, and you cannot believe that there is a God, pray that you may find Him. The Bible has said, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that seek Him." But the Bible comes from an age and a race in which the existence of God was never doubted. The movements of modern thought have unsettled the most ancient foundations. And if there should be a reader of these pages who has lost that primal faith that there is a Father of love and power, responsible for his life, I urge you: "Pray, pray in the name of Jesus, that you may find your Father."

Book recommended: "The Open Secret," by R. F. Horton (Thomas Law).

X

THE AFTER LIFE

THE confusion which prevails in our view of what happens to us at death is largely due to this: In a vague way we accept the Bible teaching on the subject; but we forget that the Bible has not a clear and consistent doctrine of the future life. When we attempt to shape our thought by the Bible, as a whole, we obtain the blurred effect of a generalised photograph. made by superimposing several portraits on the top of one another. For, not to go into minor varieties, there are three very decided differences in the Bible—an earlier stage, a middle stage, and a final stage. Order can be educed out of the whole by recognising a development, and accepting the final as the true. But it is quite impossible to obtain a consistent doctrine by combining the several doctrines of the successive ages. Broadly speaking, the Law says nothing of a future life, the prophets teach a resurrection of the dead, Christ teaches the continuance of life through death. But the difficulty of the question is great, even when this progress is recognised, for vague reminiscences of an older view always survive in the later stage. And in the case of Jesus Himself, His teaching, original and startling, is transmitted to us through minds which were deeply and indelibly stained with the opinions of

their time. By reviewing the three stages and recognising the principle of progress, we may reach the ultimate teaching of the Bible on the subject. The question whether the Bible is our final authority, or whether some other teaching takes us further, must be left in abeyance. For until the Bible teaching is better understood, we can scarcely judge how it stands in relation to other views. Perhaps, however, the discussion will be clearer if I avow my own complete agnosticism on the subject outside the Christian revelation. Apart from Christ, His teaching, His own resurrection, and His bestowal of the Spirit, I know of no authentic evidence for the fact, or for the nature, of a future life. The prolonged investigation made by the late Mr. F. W. H. Myers into the phenomena of Spiritualism led that honest and gifted mind back to the Christian faith. At the conclusion of his work, he writes, "we can now claim to have discovered something within us which belongs to an environment which is exempt from earthly conditions, and which may antecede at once and interpenetrate our material scheme of things. Those ancient views, therefore, which represent the soul's immortality as determined by its very nature and origin find themselves now as never before supported and reinforced."[1] But the conviction felt by the author is not conveyed to the reader.

Raking among the pathological facts of double personality, the experiments of hypnotism, the extraordinary experiences of dreams, visions and trances, is a sordid

[1] "Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death," by F. W. H. Myers, ii, 525.

and unsatisfying way of establishing the soul's survival of death. And when all is said and done, it is the bare survival that is established, with no light upon the condition of the after-life.

Outside of this dubious psychology, science has nothing to say about immortality. Its final word is a suspense of judgment. Some minds incline to a belief in the future, some do not; on the whole, the belief is humanising and expanding; where nothing, therefore, can be known, let us incline to the hope, the unsupported hope![1]

Other religions have nothing to tell us on the subject which is original or credible. The dreary transmigrations of Buddhism, with the distant hope of Nirvana, are an unmitigated curse to the human intellect. Compared with the typically Indian conceptions, it would be advantageous to convince the Hindoo that at death he dies for ever, and must, therefore, make the most of life. Theosophy, which is Hinduism adapted for the West, has not succeeded in conveying to men a message of life and immortality brought to light; it is not a Gospel, it is only an esoteric philosophy.

The practical alternative is, therefore, Christ or nothing. In Christ we know that we shall survive death, and we know the manner of the survival; apart from Christ, we *know* nothing, and speculation seems singularly futile. If Christ be not risen, the solid and valuable hope of mankind on this subject falls to the ground. It will be seen, therefore, that we are justified in confining the enquiry here to the teaching of the Bible.

[1] See Professor Osler's beautiful booklet on the Immortality of the Soul.

The After Life

1. The Law makes no reference to a life after death at all. The rewards of obedience are within the terms of earthly blessing; the punishment of disobedience is earthly disaster, and death. The school of the Sadducees, treating the Law as the authentic revelation, and the rest of Scripture as secondary, denied the resurrection, and believed in no disembodied spirits. When the Rabbis attempted to refute the position of the Sadducees on their own ground, they were reduced to the most pitiful expedients. Their strongest argument was that in the copies of the Song of Moses an extra letter occurred, which indicated that Moses not only spoke the words of the song, but *will* speak it in a future world. A mind must be very rabbinical to feel the force of such an argument.

It will be remembered that Warburton, in the eighteenth century, wrote a famous book called "The Divine Legation of Moses," in which he endeavoured to show that Moses must have been inspired by God, because, coming out of Egypt, where the belief in the life after death was universal and fundamental, he constructed a polity and a code without any reference to it. And one must admit how remarkable it is that a law, a revelation of God, which moulded a people, and continues to hold them together after the shocks and dispersions of ages, should use no sanction of heaven or hell, hold out no rewards, and fulminate no threats, beyond the term of our mortal life.

Mosaism, like Confucianism, stands in curious isolation from the universal feeling and conviction of mankind, that after death comes the judgement. And

though it was impossible to keep out the germs of thought and aspiration which fill the atmosphere of human life, and the expectation of resurrection, and of heaven and hell, stole into Israel from the world around it, the negative doctrine of the Law reverberates all through the Old Testament. Even the poets, who are of all men the most convinced defenders of immortality, occasionally allow the sombre view of the Law to overpower them. A Psalmist will complain that in death there is no remembrance of God ; the living, only the living, can praise Him. Job anticipates the complete cessation of being (vii. 8, xx. 9). "Man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the river decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep" (xiv. 10–12).

The philosophy of Israel, if the Wisdom Literature may be so described, differs from the philosophy of the Greeks in nothing more than in this: While Plato has an elaborate and richly-coloured eschatology, and leads the soul of the dead into a world of spirit, where the judge pronounces on each life, and the wicked go into eternal torment, while the righteous go into Elysium, Ecclesiastes sighs over the finality of death, the long home to which man goes, when the cord of life is broken, nor is his pensive and world-weary pessimism relieved by a gleam of hope for the future.

It is easy, then, from the Law, and from the echoes of its teaching in the rest of the Old Testament, to construct a doctrine of annihilation out of the Bible. If

the Bible is verbally inspired, texts will show that when a man dies he does not live again.

This plain and unmistakable stratum of Bible teaching we habitually disregard. The commonsense of mankind is too strong for it. An instinct of immortality is in the human race. Though science opposes it, and philosophy is seldom convincing on the subject, an irrepressible conviction breaks up through all human life, that though worms devour the body we shall stand on the earth again, and with our eyes see God. If Moses had the design, which is attributed to him, of turning the attention of his people entirely away from the hope of immortality, he signally failed. Before the exile prophets and psalmists began to breathe the doctrine of the future life, and when the exiles returned from Babylon, they brought with them a belief in the resurrection which Judaism retains to this day.

2. The second view which runs through the whole Bible is that of the prophets—a view shared with the Egyptians and the Greeks, and other races of mankind. It seems to have entered Israel through the prophets; it echoes through the Psalms; it gathered force in the Maccabean age, and in New Testament times it was the orthodox doctrine of Judaism, only denied by the Sadducees, who, for that reason, were regarded with dislike by the whole community. This view was, that the body is placed in the grave, and the soul sleeps until the day of resurrection, when the body re-animated by the soul will rise and be judged. Some will rise to contempt and shame, others to blessing and reward.

The earliest of the written prophets, Hosea, contains the words, which, ambiguous as they are in their application, are in themselves a striking manifesto of a creed widely differing from the Law: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, where are thy plagues? O grave, where is thy destruction?" (xiii. 14). And so the great prophet of the eighth century: "Thy dead shall live; My dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead."[1] In the exile the promise of restoration is couched in terms of resurrection. The dry bones will live again: "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O My people" (xxxvii. 12). In the Maccabean age the doctrine of resurrection and judgement assumed the form, which, in the popular mind it has retained ever since.[2] "And the earth shall restore those that are asleep in her, and so shall the dust those that dwell therein in silence, and the secret places shall deliver those souls that were committed unto them."

This was the view which prevailed in the Christian Church, and determined the reverent mode of Christian burial. The body of the dead was no longer burnt, according to the practice of the Romans, but was laid asleep in a bed; the Catacombs were filled with the sleeping saints. The burial ground was called in Greek a dormitory (cemetery). The day of resurrection was expected, when those who are asleep would

[1] ISA. xxvi. 19.

[2] DAN. xii. 2, 3, *cf.* 2 ESD. vii. 32.

issue out of the tombs as Lazarus did at the command of Christ, as Christ did by the power of God. Islam accepted the same view; the dead are buried, not in burying grounds, but along the roads, so that they may easily awake as the angel of the resurrection passes along; or they are kept in comfortable and carpeted rooms, the tarbush hanging at the head ready for use again. In this respect Christendom has relapsed from the early practice and even from Moslem example. We make hideous and depressing cemeteries; and we exasperate our sorrow in bereavement by the fiction that our beloved lie in vaults and graves, churchyards, and thronged cities of the dead.

3. But there is a third view in the Bible. We may without hesitation ascribe it to Jesus. And though it has never been frankly accepted by Christendom, it creeps into our thoughts and gilds the tomb with a faint light. If we can succeed in connecting this view with our Lord, and can venture to hold and defend it consistently, acknowledging that the other views were transitional, representing only the growth of belief, until Christ brought life and immortality to light in His Gospel, we shall be able to comfort each other more effectually beside the grave: "He is not there, we know he is not there." We may even in time sweep away the hateful paraphernalia of burials, which are wholly pagan. The less Christian the Church is, the more appalling and depressing it makes the grave. But when it becomes approximately Christian, it uses the old words of Hosea, with the

ring of Paul's faith in them: "O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

The third view in the Bible is, that while death is only the dissolution of the material body, the informing personality continues to live. There is no thought of sleeping or of suspended animation. Active, conscious, progressive, the spirits who fall asleep in Jesus wake at once and fare on there as here. This view prevails very widely in Protestant Christianity, that is wherever men are allowed to form their beliefs by the unfettered study of Scripture. The after-world of the Catholic Church, with its Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, is a very different conception from what we may call the resultant view of the Bible.

Now, are we justified in speaking of Christ's view and identifying it with the one before us? There is language put into His mouth which implies view number two, *e.g.* "The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done ill unto the resurrection of judgement."[1] But it may be argued that the form of this language was determined by the mind and opinion of the reporter. For if we go on a little farther in the same Gospel, we find Martha repeating the current belief: "He shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day," and Jesus corrects her by saying: "I am the resurrection and the life."[2] A saying like this opens our eyes to the fact that Jesus took a new and original view of the question, a view determined by His own person, and His own approaching

[1] JOHN v. 28, 29. [2] JOHN xi. 25.

experience. What that view was, might hardly be gathered from the story of Dives and Lazarus, in which the two do not lie in the grave, but pass at once to their respective places; because the whole setting is pictorial, and we are not at liberty to press figurative language to establish doctrine. But in the words to the thief on the Cross the view of Jesus is made clear: "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." He certainly did not think of a long sleep in the tomb, and a final waking to life. As death occurred, Paradise was entered. What he taught in the word from the Cross, He had held throughout His teaching. This may be shown from the surprising and original argument by which He proved the life after death even from the Law of Moses. No Rabbi ever advanced such an argument; but with Jesus it was decisive. If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that shows the patriarchs to be living, because God is not the God of the dead but of the living. The argument is of course not logical but theological. Because God is what He is, what Jesus knows Him to be, the souls that have been in relation with Him, have been His friends, and the objects of His grace, do not die. The doctrine of Jesus offered an ocular demonstration in the Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah, living indeed, were seen conversing with Him.

The doctrine He held and taught was confirmed by what happened after His own death. Those manifestations, imperfectly recorded as they were, yet prove to be a veritable Gospel of the Resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus is the one clear and verified

evidence we have of the mode and condition of the after life. The lesson could only be impressed on mankind by the *tour de force* of a physical resurrection. The body left the tomb. But the truth which is conveyed by that extreme measure was not, and is not, that the soul of the believer will lie in the tomb until the resurrection at the last day. It was precisely the same assurance as that which was given to the thief on the Cross. The body of the resurrection was a spiritual body, which passed through closed doors, and ascended up to heaven. The practical inference, therefore, from the resurrection of Jesus was from the first, that at death we put off our mortal body to be clothed at once in a body suitable to the new condition of existence. And this is the doctrine of Christianity which supersedes, and ought to abolish, the crude and tentative notions through which it was reached.

On the authority, and from the example of Jesus, we who believe in Jesus know that when we die, we live, *Mors janua vitæ*. The dissolution of the body does not affect *me*. I live, I continue, I fare on, carrying with me the results of my probation; alive unto God, with Christ, I really begin the career for which life on earth was a preparation. Strong in this faith of Jesus, I revise not only the Law of Moses and the Resurrection doctrine of the Old Testament, but those passages of the New Testament which are still coloured with the worn-out doctrines.

In this practical conclusion we have the example, if not the authority, of Paul. He betrays in his language the confusion between view two and view three, which

exists in Christendom to-day. Accepting current ideas, the inherited dogma of Judaism, he spoke as if the body would rise from the ground; he used the analogy of the seed, and suggested that the resurrection of this new body out of the old would occur at a remote future date, when the trumpet should sound. This was all Jewish or Greek. But in his own religious experience he follows closely the ideas of Jesus. He felt that while the outward man was daily decaying, the inward was renewed. He believed that when the tabernacle of the flesh was dissolved in death, he would be clothed upon with a spiritual body and mortality would be swallowed up of life.[1] At the end of his life he had no doubt at all that to be absent from the body would be to be present with the Lord. When his warfare was over he anticipated an immediate crown.

We may therefore distinguish between the Bible view and the Christian view. And even in the Christian view we may distinguish between the view of Christ himself, and the view of those followers whose thought was indelibly tinged with prevailing opinions upon the subject. And we propose to bring order and consistency into our thoughts by accepting Christ's view as the final one, which is entitled to correct all that went before. Nowhere does the truth of the progressive character of revelation bring a more welcome relief, or a clearer light. In no case have we more reason to be thankful for the Protestant right of going to Scripture for ourselves, and for the Protestant

[1] 2 COR. iv. 16, v. 4.

method of criticism which enables us to arrive at the final and absolute truths of Christianity.

Let us endeavour to state clearly the belief of the after life, as it results from accepting the revelations of Christ as decisive. Directly the physical change which we call death takes place, the personality which has used and inhabited the body is clothed upon with another body, a spiritual one; a body like the Lord's body after the resurrection, suitable for that new order in which we are to live. This clothing upon with the new body is what is sometimes called—from the earthly standpoint—the resurrection of the body. "He giveth us a body," that is, the creative power of God makes an organism in the world beyond death, just as He made an organism for this present world. The decaying particles of the body of our humiliation are not needed for the purpose; they would be useless in the world of spirit. The idea that the skull and bones, and even the skin and flesh, with which we died, will be summoned out of the fire of cremation or out of the dust of the grave, was only an accommodation, to enable men in earlier times to realise the fact of a resurrection. That accommodation may still be necessary for simple and unimaginative people. But we should greatly help the world at large if we could make clear the Christian truth, that the resurrection is always taking place. As Christ says, I *am* the resurrection and the life, so in Him all are made alive. The resurrection accompanies death—there is no interval. In the same way, the judgement is immediate. The last judgement is for every soul the practical verdict passed

upon life at its close. The soul emerging into the resurrection-world is flashed into the presence of Christ, and judged. No lengthy investigation is needed, for everything is known, and the verdict is ready. We appear before the judgement-seat of Christ, and our destiny in the world after death is determined. The judgement is not arbitrary, but results from the intrinsic facts. What we *are* as the sum and result of our earthly life, we proceed to *be* in the progressive life of the new order. Just as here there is a good and holy and unselfish and godly life, which may be called heaven, and a base, egoistic, sensual, godless life, which may be called hell, so will it be in the after life. At the judgement we pass into the heaven or hell of the æonian world. There knowledge fails and speculation is vain. Is the decision of this earthly life final, or can it be corrected? Must we remain for ever in the state which is determined for us at death? Can consciousness die out, and the soul cease to be? Is there a second death which means extinction? Does the redemptive process continue in the world beyond, and will Christ, who descended into Hades, labour to redeem those who were lost here? These and similar questions are constantly raised; but no decisive answer can be given to them. Dogma crystallises answers, which hold their ground for a time; but the answers, being without genuine evidence, eventually lose their power and are disregarded. The Christian doctrine only takes us to the Resurrection and the Judgement, the Heaven and the Hell, which follow immediately after death; the rest remains unrevealed.

So far as the veil is lifted by the striking pictures which our Lord drew of the future, the whole stress is laid on the decisive separation, and on the irrevocable punishment of the bad. But we shall be very chary of pressing these indications, for He, like smaller teachers, necessarily used the language and ideas of the time, in order to convey His meaning to His contemporaries. And it is quite possible that the gulf fixed between Dives and Lazarus represents only the immediate effect of the two earthly lives just concluded; and even the radical distinction between the sheep and the goats can only be used to bring out the immediate verdict or award on life as it has just been lived. Æonian life and æonian punishment may refer only to a quality, and not to duration. But we cannot tell. Indeed our knowledge of that after life is very small. But the faith which we have just been examining assures us that our dead live unto God; they are not in the cold ground. Their presence with us and influence over us can be felt; they are often far nearer to us by the transition and better able to help us. We do not sorrow as those who are without hope. We rejoice, because we now know them as we know Christ, and in Him. Thus Mr. W. L. Walker adds a very touching note to his work on Christian Theism, which I take the liberty of quoting:

"It is hoped that it is not out of place to state here that, shortly after the MS. of this book was sent to the publishers, the writer had the misfortune to lose a devoted wife. She was deeply interested in this subject, and before she passed away the writer promised to cherish her spiritual presence, and asked her (if it was right and not hurtful) to

try and manifest her presence to him. He feels bound to say that he believes she has done so." [1]

The vulgarities and chicaneries which have attached themselves to Spiritualism must not blind our eyes to the evidence, of another kind, which produces an overwhelming conviction in the minds of innumerable Christians, that their beloved ones who have passed behind the veil are at no distance from them, and even hold silent intercourse with them.

[1] "Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism," by W. L. Walker. p. 443.

Book recommended: "The Christian Doctrine of Immortality," by Professor Salmond (T. & T. Clark).

XI

THE DIFFICULTY ARISING FROM THE VARIETY OF RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

THERE is a singularly illuminating remark in one of the letters of Paul, that there must be heresies in order that they who are approved may be made manifest.[1] The heresies are not in themselves admirable; they are elsewhere ranked among the works of the flesh.[2] But they are inevitable, and they serve a useful purpose. If we could imagine religious truth delivered to mankind in clear and unmistakable formulæ, about the meaning of which there could be no dispute, we should be bound immediately to picture to ourselves a stagnant spiritual state. The certainty and rigidity of the truth would be a coercion as strong as that of the Mediæval Church. Indeed that Mediæval Church gives us an instructive illustration of what results from expunging the thought of Paul, that "there must be heresies." The Roman Church in its plenitude of power decided that "there must *not* be heresies." The organised campaign for the extermination of the Albigenses, or Alva's commission to execute the whole population of the Netherlands, was the result. The conscientious vigour of the Inquisition produced

[1] I COR. xi. 19. [2] GAL. v. 20.

uniformity of practice, if not of belief—by the simple method of burning those who did not conform.

But if religious truth *were* certain, if its propositions were clear and indisputable, nothing could prevent it from tyrannising over the human will in the same way. Terrible as the mischief is which the Roman Church produces, it would be still more terrible if its doctrines were true, and if its infallibility were assured. No careful student of the Papacy in the century before the Reformation, reading for example the history of the Popes as written by the Roman Catholic professor at Vienna, Pastor, can help seeing that Protestantism was necessary for the survival of Roman Catholicism. Unless that "heresy" had blazed into being, and elicited Ignatius Loyola and the counter-Reformation, it seems certain that Catholic Christianity would have perished of its own corruptions. One uniform and certain rule of truth would not be for the advantage of truth or of men in the present conditions of human life. "There must be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest."

At the same time everyone must feel the difficulty and bewilderment which ensue where perfect freedom of thought is allowed. Never did men live in such unshackled liberty as we do in England,

> "The land where, girt by friend or foe,
> A man may speak the thing he wills."

Every one may have any religion he likes, or none. Every form of Christianity is tolerated and protected. And through the constant intercourse with other

countries and the activity of the Press, every one sees spread before him the infinite variety of religious opinion which prevails in the world. There are the three universal religions, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism. There are the racial or national religions, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Shintoism. There are the myriad cults and superstitions of the uncivilised peoples.

Or if the modern man in the West is irrevocably committed to Christianity, or on sufficient grounds rules the other religions out of court as belonging to lower stages of progress, yet Christianity itself presents the broad divisions, Greek, Catholic, and Protestant, besides numerous Eastern Churches, Syrian, Nestorian, Armenian, Coptic, Abyssinian. If the Englishman is sufficiently grounded in Protestantism to confine his thought to that one branch of Christianity, still he is confronted with Anglicanism, claiming to be Catholic, Presbyterianism claiming to be Scriptural, Methodism claiming to be Evangelical, besides the innumerable Independent Churches, which base themselves solely on New Testament usage. But in a free atmosphere like ours new movements shoot out continually with meteoric suddenness; a Salvation Army, or a Church of Mrs. Eddy, shoots across the sky and covers a hemisphere within a few years. And then, within Christendom, yet in protest against all its dogmas and practices, arise movements like the Theosophical or the Ethical societies, Socialist brotherhoods, and Labour churches, all recommending their shibboleths and demanding adhesion.

In this complexity and collision of beliefs, and in the apparent want of any sufficient authority which can decide between them, it can occasion little wonder that many disavow all religious beliefs and find refuge in agnosticism.

It must be admitted that they who desire an excuse for being rid of religion have it ready at hand, just as they who want a pretext for giving up food or medicine can find it in the diversities of dietetic or medical theories.

But we cannot give up food, and therefore we take what is good for us, in spite of conflicting authorities. In sickness we must seek medical help however much doctors may disagree. And man, speaking broadly, must have religion. He cannot let it alone. The variety of beliefs, therefore, does not absolve us from the duty, nor destroy the possibility, of our finding truth.

Let me address to the reader a personal question. Truth being the one prize worth gaining in life, will you be baulked of your prize, and miss the object for which you came into being, because, when all coercion is withdrawn, and men have perfect freedom to enquire, and liberty to act on what they believe, the variety of opinions is great, and the conflict of dogmas is loud?

Is there not another conclusion to be drawn with far greater reason? The variety of opinions rather shows the necessity of religion. The search which issues in many conflicting beliefs at least shows how instinctive and irrepressible the search is. We cannot resist the conviction that there is some reality behind the veil,

when so many men, in so many ways, are endeavouring to lift a corner of it and to see.

Let us for a moment take a broad and inclusive survey of the human race. You see men in every age and every country feeling after God, seeking the spiritual world, if haply they may find. From the pathetic records of man in the Neolithic Age, and the offerings presented to the unseen at the grave of the dead, through the vast systems of Babylonian or Egyptian religion, in the testimonies of Peruvian and Mexican religious rites, no less than in the great systems which survive and cover the earth to-day, under countless forms, the heart of man is essentially engaged in one quest: it is seeking its God. It knows it will find no rest until it finds rest in Him.

You cannot therefore separate yourself from your kind in the search, however you may differ from this view or that in the discovery. If you renounce the search, if you proclaim your indifference to the great questions, What is God? What is His truth? What is His will? you only fall out of the ranks of humanity, relapsing into the herd of lower creatures which nourish a dim life within the brain, regardless of the aspirations and longings which are the noblest characteristics of man.

But unhappy is the man who cuts himself off from the body of humanity, the man who would cease to be human because humanity is divided into many races and languages, and presents an infinite variety of customs and ideas. And, as religion is of all human characteristics the most constant and universal, woe to

the man who cuts himself off from all religion because there are diversities in it. No doubt the search is more difficult, because the varieties are so numerous, but for the same reason the search is more necessary. It is all men's quest, all men's desire, to know the truth of religion. The heresies must appear, that the approved may be manifest, but the discovery of the truth is the goal, the attainable goal.

Let us assume, then, that we are not seeking an excuse to escape religion, but are honestly seeking the truth of religion, under a conviction that what humanity seeks we must seek, and that what is sought by the whole must be within the range of discovery.

Now surely in Christendom, at least, there are at least two truths in which all agree. Granted that there are many and exasperated divisions, you may enquire of a Christian, East or West, Catholic or Protestant, Anglican or Dissenter, and on these two points you will find that there is a common conviction, here is a platform which all Christians occupy together. And the more stress you lay on the diversities of churches and sects, the more striking, it must be admitted, will be this agreement on the truth which is common to all. All Christendom holds (1) that God is, and (2) that Christ is the way to Him.

But these two beliefs are so important and so inclusive that, if they are held, the varieties of opinion must in reality be secondary, if not unimportant. And if the contact of races and religions, which is the most wonderful feature of our day, points to a possible agreement on these two beliefs, if India and China begin to

accept Christian Theism, and to see that God is, because Christ is, and by Christ men come to God, a wide view of the thought of our time may lead us to the surprising conclusion that all mankind is graded according to a recognisable principle, and the van is occupied by those who believe in Christ as the way to God. Such a view of a unity towards which the race is tending may do more than counterbalance the bewildering diversity of beliefs in detail within the bounds of Christendom.

But let us examine the two beliefs which unite Christendom and make it a light and guide to the world. God is. In a sense, as we saw in a previous chapter, this is a belief which unites mankind. That prayer of Pope's, which anticipated the study of Comparative Religion by nearly two centuries, is really an echo of thoughts as old as the records of man; it is the essence of religion, at all times and everywhere:

Father of all, in every age,
  In every clime adored
By saint, by savage, or by sage,
  Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,

Thou great first Cause, least understood,
  Who all my sense confined
To know but this, that Thou art good,
  And that myself am blind,

Yet gave me in this dark estate
  To see the good from ill,
And binding nature fast in fate,
  Left free the human will,

To Thee whose temple is all space
  Whose altar earth, sea, skies.
One chorus let all being raise,
  All nature's incense rise.

That is a prayer in which the Vedantist could join with the Christian, the Buddhist with the Moslem. But Christendom interprets the Father of all, the great First Cause, through Christ. And it is the God revealed in Christ whom all churches, however otherwise divided, adore. All are agreed that God, as revealed in Christ, is love, holy love, the author of all being, the maker and upholder of the universe, who stands to man in the relation which is best expressed by that of a father to his children.

It is its conception of God which makes each religion. And this conception of God makes Christianity. What are the divergencies of religious opinion in comparison with this agreement in the idea of the infinite and eternal Being, who is the author of all? Let us agree on this, we may well say, and sink all other differences. This creed is sufficient; let us expand in different ways according to the conditions, racial or personal, of individuals.

The second belief is already involved in the first: Christ is the way to God. "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." The God of Christianity is revealed and known through Christ. It is God in Christ that Christians worship. There have been many schools of thought—as Paul says, there must be such—interpreting Christ in various ways. But in Christianity there is no difference of opinion on this point, that in some way or other to interpret Christ is to know God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" is a clue on the lips of Jesus in the fourth Gospel to all

theology. Some may lay stress on the teaching of Jesus, and show how pure and lofty His conception of God was. Some may rather insist on the Person of Jesus, the consciousness which reflects God as in a mirror. Some may dwell on the life of beneficence and social betterment, and infer the purpose of God from the conduct of Jesus. But the prevalent interpretation of Christ in Christendom has always been, that the voluntary and deliberate self-offering of Christ on the Cross for the sins of this world, an offering with which God was well pleased, is the clearest and fullest exhibition of God's character. In that offering God is seen accepting the death of Jesus as the condemnation of sin, so that He is able to forgive sinners, without any derogation from His supreme holiness. It is in the Cross that God appears as One who is just and yet forgiving and saving the unjust.

It is not a little remarkable to note how this supreme revelation of the being and character of God is foreshadowed in the ethnic religions. That one must die for all to bring men to God, seems to be a latent instinct of the human race.

Professor Frazer, in "The Golden Bough," collects numerous instances from all religions, and from all countries. One will suffice, with the understanding that it stands for many. The Khonds of Orissa used to offer to Tari a human sacrifice. The devoted person was set apart, bathed and anointed. Then, bound and drugged, the body was torn to pieces and scattered over the fields. The victim was regarded as divine. In the more civilised stages of natural religion, an

animal was substituted for a man; for example, in the Dionysus worship at Athens, an ox was slain instead of a boy, and the slayers were indicted for murder. The animal was eaten as a delegate for the divinity.

With the advance of thought and sensibility, the animal sacrifice seems unsatisfactory. How can the blood of bulls and goats take away sin? The sacrifice, to avail, must be voluntary, and must have in it an ethical quality. In Java the men would readily commit suicide for their sultan. In modern Japan, Lafcadio Hearn tells of a wife whose husband in an official position had lied. She arrayed herself in white and committed suicide, leaving a message behind that she wished she had more lives to sacrifice, to atone for her husband's sin.

We may trace the idea through all religions, from the most primitive to the most advanced; we may discover it underlying all our moral convictions. The unknown God, whom man desires to know, is a Being who cannot away with iniquity, whose holiness is absolute and unyielding, and yet who is bent on forgiving and saving men. Men try to reconcile the apparent contradiction, and the vast systems of sacrifice, ablution, purification, initiation, grow up in every country and in every race. For an instinct tells men what they want, though not the way of realising it. That all these methods of propitiation leave an aching void, is well known. The conscience does not attain to peace, nor the life to purity.

In Christ comes a revelation which justifies the instinct of mankind and yet shows the way by which

the instinct is satisfied. The sigh, dumb and inarticulate, for reconciliation with God, which humanity is always heaving, wins this simple answer. Nowhere is it given more clearly than in the Epistle to the Hebrews; for though the writer only has in view the sacrificial system of Judaism, which left the heart of man unsatisfied, the argument applies to all the efforts which men have made to obtain reconciliation with God. From the standpoint of Comparative Religion Judaism is not so much unique as typical. It expresses in a consummate way, and with a kind of spiritual genius, the effort of man to go about to establish his own righteousness, and so to attain peace with God.

But the doctrine of the Epistle to the Hebrews is, that the revelation of God in His Son Christ Jesus actually accomplishes what man has ever striven in vain to do. The holiness of God remains inviolable, and yet He can freely forgive sin, because in the death of Jesus sin was condemned. He who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God (ix. 14) took the condemnation of sin upon Himself, that men might be forgiven. It was the free act of Jesus. There was no constraint. The moral value lay in the voluntariness of it. "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (x. 10).

It is, therefore, by the Cross that God in Christ becomes so subduing and heart-melting a reality. The thought of Christendom about God is penetrated through and through with the idea of the sacrifice of Christ.

A perverted and ignorant theology may sometimes

have used the Cross to libel God, representing Him as punishing the innocent for the guilty, and correcting the iniquity of man by an injustice of His own. But the words and blundering interpretations have not hindered men from discovering the truth. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so was the Son of Man lifted up And whosoever believes in Him has eternal life.

But these two beliefs which unite Christendom, or let us rather call them a dual belief, for they are essentially related, the belief that God is the Being revealed by Christ, or that Christ was sent by God in order to reveal Him, will make the union of Christendom a reality, if we are only willing to concentrate our thought on the great point of agreement.

The diversity of religious opinions is the soundest reason for taking refuge in religious agreements. What all Christians believe everywhere and always, that is what we ought to believe. What Christians are divided upon, that we should hold with modesty and deference, considering that no truth of God is of private interpretation; and no private view is the foundation of a world-religion.

If the reader will be advised, and will retreat into these truths which are by all Christians accepted and avowed, he will find there a foothold from which he can examine with composure the differences, he will find the manna sent down from heaven, and the living water, on which the soul can feed. The diversities which were once a difficulty will have done him the invaluable service of driving him to the central and the real.

XII

THE ABSENCE OF A CERTAIN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

"If I had that sense of God's presence which *you* have, if I had that personal communion with the living Christ, if I knew that my sins were forgiven, and that I am a child of God, if I had the witness of the Spirit, which you speak of, I would be a Christian. But I have not, and I suppose I must take it as I find it." That is a common attitude of mind, which hinders many from a religious life, and keeps them in a vain expectation of something which after all can only come by an act of their own. Perhaps it has not always been made sufficiently clear how *we make our own religious experience.* Faith, in the Scriptural sense, is an act of the Will. It is possible that by dwelling on this very simple truth some, who are standing all the day idle, may be induced to work to-day in the vineyard.

Before pressing the point home, however, it may be well to show the fallacy which lies in the kind of objection just mentioned. In the first place, men differ from each other so completely that no one ought to expect the spiritual experience of another; what is to be looked for is *your own,* which will probably be quite unlike any other's. And in the second place, the experience of others can never really be known; we

misread the signs and the expressions. While I imagine your experience to be assurance and joy and victory, and wish that I had it, your experience may seem to yourself nothing but failure and doubt. These points deserve a little expansion.

1. The varieties of religious experience are not only numerous, they are equal to the number of the human race. There are, we suppose, 1,500,000,000 human beings on the earth. There are just so many varieties of religious experience. It is not possible for any one of these living souls to have precisely what comes to any other, because each one is distinct and individual, and cannot be confused with another. No two blades of grass in the miles of rolling prairie are alike. No two thrushes in Spring sing exactly the same; a trained naturalist distinguishes the individual song. In the vast flocks of sheep, those gregarious creatures which are the by-word of dependence and defective initiative, a careful shepherd knows each one as perfectly distinct from the rest.

Human beings, as more highly developed, are more decisively individual. It is said that the impress of the thumb-mark will identify any one out of the fifteen hundred millions. So essentially original is each person that the differences are carried down into details so apparently unimportant as this.

The old psychologists attempted a rough generalisation, and declared that there are four temperaments—the sanguine, the nervous, the melancholic, and the phlegmatic. But that is a very loose division. No person exactly represents any one of the temperaments.

Strictly speaking there are as many temperaments as there are people.

To expect, therefore, a religious experience like Paul's or John's, like Augustine's, or Thomas à Kempis', or Bunyan's, or Wesley's, would be unreasonable. One has only to reflect that the experience of each of these eminent saints is totally different from that of the others. Paul's experience of Christ and of salvation, his perspective of truth, his order of spiritual development, hardly touches John's at any point. The common element is the relation to Christ as the object of faith, the cause of the experience, and the undisputed Master. But John knows nothing of that dialectic by which Paul states and defends the Gospel, a dialectic which puts iron into the blood of his faith. And Paul is a stranger to that quietism which in John seems to mark off men and things in fixed and unchangeable spheres. To John the darkness and the light are distinct; some are in darkness and some are in light, and Christ gathers together in one the children of light. To Paul all are in darkness, but all are to be brought into the light. The inner life of Paul is a strenuous conflict, aiming at victory and the crown; the inner life of John is a serene attainment with eternity in present possession. Augustine is, in a remarkable degree, moulded on Paul, but there is not the least danger of confusing the two. No one would mistake a passage of the Confessions for a chapter of a Pauline epistle. For Paul the past is dead, and he presses buoyantly forward. For Augustine it lives and tinges his religion

with regret and self-humiliation. Paulinism is transmuted in the mind of Augustine. Presently from words of Paul is derived a doctrine which Paul would repudiate. The hints of the Fall, or of Predestination in Paul become in Augustine iron-bound theories which gripped and cramped the mind of Christians for more than a thousand years. How absolutely different is the "Imitatio Christi" from "Grace Abounding," or both from Wesley's Journal. There is the same Christ, the same salvation, the same destiny, but the experience is in each case perfectly distinct. But if in these eminent saints, all brought very near to Christ, the differences are maintained and even emphasised, we must frankly admit that our own experience of spiritual things is likely, nay, certain, to differ from that of anyone else. Nay, the careful study of the memorials of saintly lives shows that the experience of each person will change and vary at different periods almost as much as the experiences of different people diverge from one another. Look into the Epistles to the Thessalonians—how different is that Paul from the writer of Philippians! The phase of spiritual life in Ephesians and Colossians is so different from that of the four undisputed epistles that an ingenious critic, totally ignorant of the changes in spiritual experience, may easily argue that the two groups come from different minds. They may be different minds and yet both may be the mind of Paul.

When I look at my own work and compare it with work I did twenty years ago, the difference of the two

mental and spiritual attitudes is quite as great as that between the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel. There is no intrinsic or psychological reason for doubting that one man might have written those two books. The argument which would assign them to different authors must turn upon external evidence, and such evidence is wanting.

You may therefore settle it, even without pushing the illustrations any further, that your spiritual experience must be entirely your own; you must not expect it to resemble that of any one else, you must not be surprised if it shows the most marked divergence from that which it most nearly resembles.

But the second point will disincline you even more to judge yourself by others, or even to compare yourself with them.

2. The spiritual experience of another person cannot be known to you from the inside. The expressions which men use to describe the secret passages of the soul are not constant; they have no fixed meanings. One man uses strong and highly-coloured language, but he means no more than another does who uses only the lowest and most halting terms. It requires an effort of thought which few people attempt to make, if one is to realise what another's religious experience would be, interpreted in one's own language.

Perhaps I may be excused if I offer a personal illustration of this fact. Again and again I have had the opportunity of learning the impression which my religious experience makes on other people. They credit me with a degree of faith, with a personal

knowledge of Christ, with living in nearness to God; they imagine that I have a certitude, an inward victory, a joy and efficiency of service; it is shown with perfect *naiveté* and sincerity, and I have no reason to question the impression which is actually made on their minds.

But when I see myself thus as others see me, I find hardly any connection between that and the person that I see myself. This experience, which to others is like the pattern on the tapestry, is to me like the confused and disjointed threads of the work behind. Not that there is any attempt to pose or to make an impression on others; but the religious life which strikes outsiders as satisfactory is, to the experience of the person himself, a strenuous and dubious struggle, marked by failure and disappointment.

Who sees or knows the doubts and fears through which a foothold of certainty is reached? Who understands the veils that fall between the soul and the all-desired vision of Christ? Who apprehends the distance from God, which to an outer observer seems nearness to Him? Who reads the heart's bitterness, the shame of sin, the sense of defeat, the sickening fear that one is accomplishing nothing, and is indeed a wholly unprofitable servant?

Knowing then how completely I am misread by others, and even by those who have the fullest opportunity of knowing me, I settle it with myself that I can never expect to know in any real sense the experience of others. Tempting as it is to divide men into believers and unbelievers I cannot accept that division. Rather each man is divided between belief

and unbelief. No one gets farther than the cry, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief."

When, therefore, I see the bright religious experience of others, I admire it and praise God for it, but I do not make any demand that it should be my own. On the contrary, I readily admit that I read it on the outside, and can well believe that from the inside it wears a totally different aspect. My own religious life, my relation to God, my belief in Christ, must be determined by a transaction, interior and immediate, with the unseen. If I turn to look at other men's successes, which would discourage me, or other men's failures, which would comfort me, I hear a voice which says: "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

I am not unprepared for the discovery that many notorious unbelievers have died, and even lived in the faith of Christ. I read some time ago of a speech delivered in the French Chamber by M. Jaurès, the Socialist leader, who stands as the type of unbelief and opposition to religion. The report said that his words drew tears of emotion from devout Catholics who were present. On the other hand it is possible that some persons with a specious appearance of piety may prove to have had none of it at all. At the same time that the Socialist Deputy moved Catholic hearers to tears of sympathy, the Papal representative in Paris, Mgr. Marignani, was accumulating papers in his bureau, which, when they were found and published, brought a blush of shame, not to religious men only, but to everyone who can feel for the degradation of our common humanity. The Papal Court has often succeeded in producing

agents who exactly conform to our Lord's description of wolves in sheep's clothing.

We do well, therefore, to discount all the experiences of others, knowing that we see only the appearance, and can never enter into the sensations of those who have the experiences. We do well to repeat again and again, "My experience must be my own. Other men's failures cannot help me. Other men's achievements must remain known to themselves alone."

But, these preliminaries settled, we can face this simple fact, that *we make our own religious experience.* It is not a gift imparted from without, but an active work of the will within. Or, to be more exact, it is the assimilation of the gift freely offered to all, made by the will, which recognises and appropriates it.

No man can will to have another's religious experience. But every man can will to have his own. His own experience comes to him only by his will. We are thinking just now of the Christian experience, that which in its countless varieties has made the lives of the saints, the workers, the servants of Christ in all ages. Now, to put it plainly, that experience is open to all. Not, as we have seen, that the inward sensation can be the same to all, or even to any two members of the human race, but the fact of Christianity can produce in every human being, *who wills it*, the experience which, to that individual, stands for the common Christian experience.

Every invitation or command which Christianity makes is an appeal to the will. When Christ says "Follow thou me," it rests with the will to obey.

When He says "Repent and believe the Gospel," He calls upon us to do something that is within our power. Repentance has been wrapped up in doctrinal integuments, which give it a forbidding aspect. But it is the simplest possible appeal to the will. I recognise the wrong in my life, I will give it up; I see the fault of my character, I will amend it; I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned. Can anyone say that this simple μετάνοια, to use the Greek work, this change of mind or of intention, is not within the power of everyone? True, it is not within the power to give effect to the repentance. The bad habits of years, the enfeebling of the will, the moral blindness, make it impossible to carry out the "clean life ensuing" which is the complement of "the heart-sorrow." But repentance is within every man's power.

The command to repent is, thank God, accompanied by the command to believe the Gospel. Is that within our power? Certainly it is, in the sense in which the word is given. Perhaps you say, Evidence must be offered. How can I believe, by willing to believe? I can only believe what is proved. But that demur ignores the meaning of "believe" and of "Gospel" in this connection. The Gospel is the announcement of God's pardoning love in Christ, the forgiveness of your sins, because Christ came into the world to save you, and in dying offered up the full and sufficient sacrifice for human sin. That is the good news which from the beginning has been declared to us. And "believe" in this case means "take it as

true." Say it is only hypothesis, say you are only trying it. You are asked to act on the hypothesis, to try what comes to you, if it be true that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should have everlasting life.

How can it be contended that it is beyond anyone's power to take this announcement as true, "to act upon it"? Clearly it is a matter of the will. We can take any supposition and act on it. If, then, you have repented, and recognise what is wrong in you, you can, if you will, take this announcement which comes to you in the same breath with the call to repentance; you can believe the Gospel.

Listen to a great preacher pleading with you to do this, which is in your power. "Remember," said Phillips Brooks, "the Holy Spirit is God, and God is love. No man ever asks God to come into his heart, and holds his heart open, without God's entering. Men and women in the thick of life, do not go helpless when there is such help at hand: do not go on by yourselves, struggling for truth, and toiling at your work, when the Holy Spirit is waiting to show you Christ, and to give you in Him the profoundness of faith, and the delightfulness of duty."

The great object of the Christian preacher from the beginning has been to induce men to take the step, which is in their power, to exert the will, to repent and believe the good news.

I have dwelt for a moment on the initial step of the Christian faith, in order to show how, apart from all other men's experience, their denials or defences, it lies

within the power of each man to gain the experience by experiment. No one must attempt to define in a formula what the experience is. Enough to say that, by the very terms of the experiment, you proceed to act as the forgiven and accepted child of your heavenly Father, reconciled to Him in Christ. Whether that brings you joy, or a deepened sense of sin; whether you share the ecstasy which some seem to have, or abide only in the common assurance without any realising emotion, is nothing to the point. You repent and believe the Gospel, and that is for you Christianity.

But after this initial step, every one which follows is of the same kind. The commandments of Christ are your law of life. You obey them by an act of the will, resisting the forces which oppose either in yourself or in your surroundings. He bids you receive or take the Holy Ghost. You obey. With a deliberate purpose you allow the Spirit of God to rule and to shine within you, and to shape your conduct in harmony with the teaching and the example of Christ.

He bids you confess Him. You do so. You tell it to your friends, you tell it to the Church. It is not your experience you confess, but Christ your Saviour. You do not avow Him because of the joy; the joy comes only in avowing Him.

He bids you go and work for Him; you are to carry His Gospel to all creatures. You feel no fitness for the work. But you obey. In the fulfilment of that commandment, apart from apparent result, lies its great reward.

Absence of a Religious Experience

The Christian experience, not some one else's but your own, the experience that is possible for you and suitable to you, thus unfolds as your own deliberate surrender to the truth of the Gospel, and detailed response to its demands.

One word more before we leave this subject. It may reconcile us to the necessary solitariness of our experience, if we realise that each soul's spiritual history is a particular contribution to a contemplated whole. The idea is not easy to grasp; but it is illustrated both by Christ and by Peter and by Paul in ways which bring home the certainty of the fact. No two leaves on a tree are identical; no two branches are of the same shape or size. Each soul is a separate branch in the tree, which fulfils its purpose, not by trying to imitate another branch, but by maintaining its own vital and unimpeded connection with the stem. Or the simile of the building is used: each soul is a stone in the building. That simile is so far inept, as in a building there are many stones cut to the same pattern, and they differ only in the position which they occupy in the building; but it is suitable enough in its reminder that each of us is needed in a particular place, and to make any demand to occupy another position in the great building would be unreasonable. More exact is the analogy of the body. There is a spiritual organism; the limbs have their place; each is different from the rest. If we are all to be tempered together in that body, we must be content to differ wholly one from another. By the sacrifice of individuality we should injure the whole to which we belong.

By this line of reasoning each person may accustom himself to feel a unity in diversity, and to accept the diversity as a condition of the true unity. We have no more warrant for coveting another's spiritual experience than for coveting his house or his wife. We are encouraged by our faith in Christ all the more to be ourselves.

Matthew Arnold in his pensive way endeavoured to learn this great lesson from the serene processes of Nature. The aspiration interpreted by Christ is sufficiently authorised. By losing ourselves in Christ we become intensely ourselves.

Weary of myself and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
"Ye who from my childhood up have calmed me,
Calm me, Ah! compose me to the end!

"Ah! Once more," I cried, "ye stars and waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!'

From the intense, clear, star sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
"Would'st thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they!

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

Absence of a Religious Experience

" And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

" Bounded by themselves and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born voice! Long since severely clear
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear;
" Resolve to be thyself; and know that he
Who finds himself loses his misery!"

XIII

THE SOCIAL ANARCHY

On the whole the most widely-spread objection to the practice and profession of Christianity to-day is the social condition of the people. Embittered by the senseless suffering around him, the socialist, or the secularist, exclaims: If this is the result of nineteen centuries of Christianity, what need you any further witness that it is false and inoperative ; false because, if it were true, it would be operative? The nexus of economic conditions into which men and women are drawn at birth, even in this most advanced and fortunate of Christian countries, is so cruel, that the whole system of society seems not only unchristian, but antichristian. The land and the means of production are in the hands of a few. The freedom for which our fathers fought means in practice the opportunity for the strong, the clever, or the unscrupulous to command all the resources of society, while the vast mass of men and women are beaten down to a minimum of wage, and an uncertainty of earning even that, which condemns them to an anxious struggle during the days of strength and health, and a cheerless, neglected old age. All business, conducted on a basis of unlimited competition, forces men into fighting each for his own hand,

and silences scruples about the good of competitors or others. We are living always as if we were in a battle, or a shipwreck, in which each struggles for his own victory or life and cannot afford to be generous or helpful until his security is assured.

The system is, strange to say, not the result of poverty or failure, but rather of wealth and of success. It is the enormous productivity of the modern world, the ingenious discoveries which dispense with labour, and the untrammelled freedom of the individual, which lead to the miseries we deplore. Raw material and manufactured goods alike are produced with such rapidity, and in such abundance, that there is enough for everyone in these islands, to live healthily and comfortably. But a share in the products of the earth and of labour can only be given to those who give labour or capital. The workers have no capital but their labour, and if their labour is not wanted, as frequently happens in the fluctuations of manufacturing and markets, they have nothing to offer; they sit at the banquet of life with no right to partake; they can live only by doles which humiliate them, or by dishonesty, which demoralises them.

Thus "to provide things honest in the sight of all men," a precept which was perfectly practicable in a simple society, becomes for many a counsel of perfection among ourselves. The clever and industrious, if they have health, can provide things—as Webster said, in all professions there is plenty of room at the top—but "things honest," a competence or wealth which does not rob or injure others, a good for oneself which is

equally a good for all, to secure this is the fortune of comparatively few.

> " O terque quaterque beatos
> Agricolas sua si bona norint,"

says Virgil in the growing complexity of Roman society. And we should say, Thrice happy they who earn their living by honest and useful work about which their conscience gives them no uneasiness. But in modern English society, especially in cities, sensitive people find it hard to lay the flattering unction to their souls that their private success is the common good. There is a sickening sense of discomfort. The work done, the way of doing it, the trade customs, the tricks, the glosses, the chicanery, the reserves, make the conscience restive. A glance at Christ's laws, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, or, Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you, brings a vague discomfort. Is Christendom governed by Christ? Or is the Christian state a solemn hypocrisy, accepting Him in name, denying Him in deed? Is Christianity a delusion, a weak though beautiful idealism, unable to cope with the realities of human nature or with the facts of life on this planet?

Not to have felt this difficulty, not to have raised these questions, would argue blindness and insensibility. We cannot wonder if many have found the sole answer in a moral revolt, and in a bitter surrender of the religion, which to them seems to have failed. If I, or any other man, can offer an answer to the problem, which has proved satisfying, and has led to fruitful effort, it is a clear duty to present the answer for the

help of others. My solution, such as it is, I will state as convincingly as I am able.

First of all, I am very sure that something is wrong. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; and I know that neither the earth nor its fulness is being used in accordance with the wish of the Owner. The reader of the daily papers can show day by day that God's will is *not* done on earth. I take up a paper at random: here is an account of a man who gives a dinner to twelve friends, which costs £1,000; on the other side of the same sheet is the sordid tale of a man, thirty-six years of age, in London, unable to find work, and starving. He and his mother could not bring themselves to apply to the relieving officer. He hoped and tramped and starved. The post-mortem examination revealed that there was no fatty tissue left in the poor body at all. There were Dives and Lazarus in modern London, just as they were pictured by Jesus. The same glaring contrast is repeated in every accurate record of a day's life in Christendom. To say that God wished the one man to spend £1,000 on one dinner, while another man in the same town was seeking in vain the means of keeping body and soul together, would be a more daring blasphemy than Robert Blatchford has ever published. We know that God absolutely condemns the condition of things which is so indicated; the condemnation is expressed in the brave words of Jesus, which say that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, and the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell being in torment.

The economic arrangements in the Law of Moses

show the ideal in this matter. Every man had his holding of land. It could not be alienated; even if it were sold, it reverted to him at the end of fifty years. There can be no reasonable doubt that, according to God's will, every man would have his own piece of land, and would be obliged to have it, enough to raise for himself the food and clothing needed for himself and his family. When the distribution of things was altered by the division of labour, and some tilled the soil, while others engaged in manufacturing or trading; the primal right should not have been disturbed, the fee simple of his own bit of land should have remained in the hand of each.

No one can imagine that it is God's will, when a city grows up, that the land on which it stands should belong to individuals, who can quietly appropriate the unearned increment, the increased value due to the labour and enterprise of others. However innocent the individual owner may be, in the judgement of the kingdom of God this ownership is robbery, and the misery and degradation which result from it are the result of a fundamental violation of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." The slums of a modern city are not the result of God's laws, but a result of breaking them.

No one thinks that the sweated industries express God's will. He would not have one of these "little ones" perish. A Labour Board in each industry fixing a living wage, and preventing any employment of labour without due payment for it, would be the irreducible minimum of justice which His law would demand.

These are but examples which serve to illustrate the principle. The followers of Jesus are bound to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven"; and therefore they are bound to work and to sacrifice, to correct these obvious violations of the will of God. To admit that the present state of things is in harmony with His will, would be to blaspheme Him, and to repudiate all the teaching and example of Him whom He sent into the world to save it.

But there is a point which is often missed. The reform of social abuses is not the direct work of Christianity; it must be effected by Christian men in their capacity as citizens, by the methods of education and legislation which are put into their hands. This is made evident by Christ himself. When a man asked Him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, Christ said that was not His function. He distinguishes between the things of Cæsar and the things of God. His kingdom is not of this world. Christianity is a message to the soul; it proposes to make that right with God, and efficient for its work in life; it is no more a reproach to Christianity that it is not a political or socialistic propaganda, than it is a reproach to a teacher that he leaves medicine to the doctor.

Christianity lives in, lives through, and masters, all conditions of human life. But it would lose its power if it were identified with any scheme of government, political organisation, or economic theory. It did not liberate the slaves, but treated them as brothers. It did not destroy Cæsar, but aimed at converting him. It

is not republican or monarchical, but claims both political methods. It is not socialistic nor individualist, though it reaches society through the individual. It will not decide between protection and free trade.

But as the soul is thoroughly Christian, receiving and expressing the life of God, it will, as citizen, and member of a political community, labour for that social justice, mercy and love, which are the essence of Christianity. The mistake has already been made of identifying the heavenly doctrine with a particular theory of the State. Constantine in this way exploited Christianity for the Empire ; and the Pope more fatally exploited it for that more ambitious Empire, the Papacy. Kings, like Charles I. or the Czar, have exploited Christianity for the divine right. The disaster to Christianity becomes patent enough, when the king of divine right is beheaded, or when the czar of divine right plunges his country into convulsion and ruin.

We must not repeat the mistake by identifying Christianity with Socialism. Socialists will no doubt be glad enough to exploit it. But it cannot be ; for Christianity, identified with Socialism, would fall with its fall, and be entangled in its blunders and disillusionment.

But the Christian, in so far as he is genuinely Christian, will bring to bear all his thoughts and influence and power, to change the social conditions and bring them into harmony with the will of God. If that endeavour is called for convenience " socialism," he will be a socialist. If, on the other hand, socialism is taken to be a radical, and immediate political

reconstruction, a redistribution of the means of production, collectivism of capital, and equal payment of workers, not according to their work but according to their needs, he may, as a politician, be a socialist, but he will be careful to distinguish between his religion, which is assured and authoritative, and his political view, which is tentative and experimental.

The reasonableness of this position ought to be clear to every one who has realised the fundamental contrast between religion and politics. Christianity is religious; Socialism is political. Christian Socialism does not mean that Christianity is Socialism; it can only legitimately mean the political view which some sincere Christians advocate. There may be other Christians, equally earnest and honest, who are not Socialists. Just as a Christian who distrusts Socialism should respect and love a Christian Socialist, so a Christian, who has adopted the Socialistic theory for the remedy of our social troubles, should recognise the rights of Christians who cannot agree with him on economic and political questions.

The need for thus insisting on a distinction between the two planes becomes evident from this one consideration: Religion, to be of use, must be available at once; its sanctions and precepts must mould our life from the beginning. Social reconstruction, on the other hand, is a work of years and even of generations. Some writers, like Mr. Kidd, in his "Social Evolution," regard the process as one that goes on of itself under the guidance of an unseen principle, very far beyond our control. But even if our active and conscious

co-operation be required, we at the most can do but little. By earnest study and effective work we may contribute a mite to the great consummation which will come by and bye. Meanwhile our little life is rounded by a span. We find ourselves in the nexus, social and economical, in which we were born. We have to battle with it, and face its moral or spiritual influences, bringing growth or degradation.

We cannot wait for, or insist on, Utopia, before we begin to live. We cannot defer our religious decisions until we are restored to the Paradise we have lost.

Whatever may be our complaint against life, we have to live it ; its conditions, however reprehensible, must be faced.

Carlyle was once told about a lady of intellect and sentiment that she had made the remark " I accept the Universe ! " His grim reply was, " 'gad, she'd better." We really have no alternative.

While, therefore, we devote ourselves, as Christians, to the bettering and reconstruction of society, we must independently turn our attention to religion. Neither for ourselves nor others is it good for us to forget our personal responsibilities, or the power which we have over our destiny. The constant insistence on the effect which bad surroundings have on us, as it is preached by socialism of all degrees, has one very deleterious effect ; it lessens the sense of personal responsibility, and weakens the effort which is made to control circumstances. Multitudes of deluded people are led to attribute their failure and uselessness to environment. They content themselves with reviling society,

or capital, or the upper classes, or the churches, instead of bravely facing their own weaknesses and faults.

Now, however earnestly we may strive to alter environment, we can never lay too much stress on the power which each one has to overcome, to defeat, to mould, to transform the conditions in which he finds himself.

"It is the excellent foppery of the world that we make guilty of our disorders, the sun, the moon and the stars," says Edmund in *King Lear*, referring to the exploded superstition of Astrology. But that excellent foppery continues in another form. No one in England would ascribe his failure in life to being born under an evil star, or to an unfavourable conjunction of planets. But many unhappy beings, who are a burden to themselves and to others, blame heredity, environment, education, the bad customs of trade or of society, for disasters which are due entirely to their own weakness or folly. Heredity is not a force to master us, but to be overcome. Our environment will shape us if we let it, but we have the power to alter it. All the bad customs around us cannot bind the resolute and heroic soul; they are to him like the withes on the arms of Samson. When the soul awakes and determines to be right and to do right, the most formidable obstacles melt into thin air, and reveal themselves to be the phantoms which they really are.

"Make thou thy life, not let thy life make thee,"

is the needed tonic of our day, when the exaggerations of social reformers have spread the notion that our life makes us in our own despite.

It is wholesome to go back to the vigorous times, which made great characters, and to read in Sir Thomas Browne, "Behold within thee the long train of thy triumphs. Chain up the unruly legion of thy breast; lead thine own captivity captive and be Cæsar within thyself."

The Socialist propaganda means well, but the mischief it does in weakening individual responsibility, and in repressing efforts at self-mastery and self-culture, is at present far greater than any betterment it has produced in the environment. A vigorous teaching, applied to adults as well as children, of the moral power which is latent in every one of us would make a society capable of Socialism. But at present the individual is unmanned. He never blames *himself*. Undisciplined, whining at life and at the world, he has not the heroic stuff which transforms society, breaks bad customs, or even secures for himself a modicum of moral progress. A populace fed on the windy generalities, the subtle flatteries, and the denunciatory bitterness, of Socialism are the last people in the world of whom a sound Socialist state could be formed. Socialism can only succeed if individuals are morally disciplined; self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, these three alone lead life to any victorious issue; without them Socialism would only be slavery in another form.

There is a further demoralisation incidental to a Socialist propaganda. The insistence laid on material things, as if life would be complete were the distribution of wealth fair, is an insult to humanity. It leads

men to fix their hopes on a goal, which when realised brings men no nearer happiness or goodness. The population of New Zealand enjoys precisely what Socialism demands. Everyone has enough food, clothing, and housing, and leisure. What is the result? A kind of dyspepsia, an universal passion for gambling, an exclusive spirit, which shuts out from their earthly paradise the sad and hunted victims of European civilisation. The half-million Anglo-Saxons in New Zealand, with every advantage that Socialism desires, enjoying the finest climate and scenery in the world, are neither better, nor happier, than any other population of the same size in the Empire. They do not produce more literature, or music, or pictures, or religious ideas, or spiritual powers, than the people of Manchester.

No; as Carlyle said: "It is a calumny on men to say that they are roused to heroic action by ease, hope of pleasure, recompense, sugar-plums of any kind in this world or the next. In the meanest mortal there lies something nobler. It is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things, and vindicate himself under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, and the dullest day drudge kindles into a hero."

Convince a boy that he can master his circumstances, and is indeed here to do so, and you have done more for him than if you give him an allotment in El Dorado.

What religion does for us, the religion of Christ, is this: It declares that the noble life is possible

just in these conditions. These conditions, produced by a rampant commercialism and an untrammelled competition, are here to be overcome. Just as in the age of militarism the hero approved himself by vanquishing the foe, so in this age of political economy the hero shows his mettle by rising superior to the obstructions and entanglements. Assuredly you are called to be a hero, a good soldier of Jesus Christ, precisely in this baffling and discouraging environment.

While, therefore, we are seeking to alter society and to bring it into harmony with the will of God, nay, as the only effectual way by which that can in any degree be done, we ourselves must play the man, and must encourage all our fellows to do the same. To do this in any real sense, religion is needed, Christianity is needed, Christ is needed.

There are two pinions on which the soul can rise, surmounting all the deadly complications of even our present disordered life, and reaching the upper air, from which it is possible to work for a general reformation. On these level wings none need despair of life here or hereafter: (1) The one is the fixed resolve not to violate conscience; (2) the other is an implicit trust in Christ as a living Presence, who can always deliver, and guide, and save.

(1) The enervated manhood of to-day forgets the heroic temper of the first Christians. They lived in a corrupt society, in which every custom was a violation of the higher law which they had accepted. They were bound to resist, even to blood, striving against sin. They refused the slightest compliance; they were ready

at all times to die for their faith. In that hard and cruel world, which scorned the weak and the untaught, and lived on a broad basis of actual slavery, they learnt to show brotherly love, to honour and succour one another. Martyrdom was not uncommon; but the confessor was almost as common as the Christian.

Men of this type change the current of events, and alter the temper of the world.

Resolve that, cost what it may, you will not violate your conscience; that, though starvation stare you in the face, you will follow that inward light, and you are already on the way to victory.

(2) But that heroic temper cannot be maintained, or justified in experience, unless it is accompanied by a lively faith in Christ, as One who is able to deliver. It is the quiet assurance: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," which puts heart into us. *Maranatha* was the early Christian watchword, indicating the nearness, the presence, of the Lord. An unflinching conviction that He is at hand, to ratify the noble resolution, to vanquish impossibilities, to open the way where it seems blocked with enormous mountain-barriers, will reach a certain success. There is no complication of circumstances, no deadly coil of evil, out of which Christ cannot deliver us. And a life built up on such deliverances is lived in that world of spiritual victory from which the forces must be derived for overcoming the vicious conditions of our time.

If all men believed absolutely in Christ, all the social troubles would cease; brotherly love, and the wish to save, would dominate the relations of men. But the

wished-for change must be wrought by those who do believe absolutely in Christ; they must be, as He said, the salt of the earth, which saves it from corruption, the light of the world which leads it out of its confusion and error.

XIV

THE RETURN TO PAGANISM

In the fourth century the Emperor Julian endeavoured to reverse the decision which had made the Empire Christian. He restored the temples of the gods and revived the cultus. He used all the powers of his autocratic position to repress the Church. The traditional *Vicisti, Galilæe* expresses the result, whether the dying Julian said it or not. The Galilæan conquered the Emperor of the West.

In the half-century before the Reformation again an attempt was made to return to Paganism. This time it was not the work of an emperor or of a government. It was far more subtle. The fall of Constantinople in 1453 brought into Italy the scholars from the East. The ancient literature of Greece and Rome was studied with enthusiasm, and it cast its spell over the strongest minds. Valla, Filelso, Beccadelli, Poggio, did their best to revive the pre-Christian ideals; they regarded everything Christian as barbarian. Cicero was more highly esteemed than the Gospels. Ovid's "Art of Love" was read with more devotion than 1 Cor. xiii. With the learning of the ancient world the vices of the ancient world revived. It is not even possible in a modern book actually to portray the morals of the Renaissance. All moral

restraint was gone. Every breach of the ethical demands of Christianity was regarded with unaffected delight. These unblushing Pagans, whose writings could not now be published, were in the employ of the Popes, and received the last sacraments of the Church like other men. The Popes themselves became Pagan. Alexander VI., Julius II., and Leo X. represent Pagan ideals and Pagan morals seated in the Papal chair. The form of Catholicism remained, but Christianity was literally gone.

The spirit of that return to Paganism is exactly caught by Browning in his poem, "The Bishop orders his tomb at St. Praxed's Church." The dying bishop gives his natural sons the command to make his tomb an artistic rival to that of the man whom he had hated, that for all time in death his monument might triumph over his adversary, while he lying there dead could hear the mutter of the Mass all day long. It is Paganism without its *naïveté* and beauty. But there is a more striking evidence of that Pagan reaction in the church of Sigismondo Malatesta at Rimini. The saints of that shrine, whose bones are preserved in the marble sarcophagi, are the philosophers or scholars of the time, who were innocent of Christian faith. The sculptures in the chapels are largely Venuses and Cupids and Graces. Everywhere is the monogram, which looks at first glance like the I.H.S. of St. Bernardino of Siena, *Jesus Hominum Salvator*. But it is really I.S., and stands for Sigismondo and the courtesan Isotta, to whom he was attached. There the visitor may see to-day the paganisation and the

profound moral corruption of the Renaissance. It seems in presence of the facts just indicated, that, but for the Reformation, Christianity would have sunk back into heathenism.[1]

And now in our own day there is a return to Paganism of another kind. Again it is not the work of governments or conquerors. It is not the mission of Islam, nor, as yet, the irruption of the yellow race. It is not this time the discovery of an ancient literature or the sighing after a forgotten culture. It is rather the result of a very rapid extension of our knowledge of the universe, and an immense growth of the means of enjoyment. The religious truth of Europe has not adapted itself to the scientific truth, which rushes on from discovery to discovery with the impetuosity of a great river. And at the same time the prodigious growth of the instruments of production, and the mechanical contrivances for the convenience of life, has numbed the souls of the present generation to the things of God and to the ways of the Cross.

Listen to an allegory:—

"The Spirit of Modern Progress one day called up a human being, and said to him: 'I perceive that you are discontented with your life. You long for things beyond your power. Tell me, now, what it is that will make you happy, and I will give it to you.'

"The human being stopped a moment to reflect before he replied:

[1] In the "Geschichte der Papste," by Ludwig Pastor, the history of this period is faithfully given from the Roman Catholic standpoint. The picture is more lurid, the wickedness of the Popes is more clearly delineated, and the hopeless corruption of the whole system is more conclusively proved, than in any Protestant work with which I am acquainted.

'If you have such wonderful power at your command, then make my life more comfortable, for I am weary of it.'

"'You ask what is easy,' replied the Spirit; and thereupon he gave the human being beautiful cities, with streets that were sometimes clean, and police departments that were occasionally efficient. He gave him handsome houses with modern plumbing and electric lights, and a thousand other things that made life comfortable.

"'Now,' said the Spirit, 'do you wish for anything more? for you have but to ask and I will give it to you.'

"'I should wish,' replied the human being, 'that my business life were more comfortable.'

"'That, too, is easy,' answered the Spirit; and thereupon he gave the human being telephones and telegraphs, railroads and steamships.

"And after this the human being asked that his pleasures be made more comfortable, and thereupon the Spirit gave him fireproof theatres and comic operas, motor cars and yachts.

"Then again the Spirit asked, 'Do you still desire more?' and the human being replied, 'Yes; make my religion more comfortable.'

"'That is simplicity itself,' answered the Spirit; and thereupon he gave the human being magnificent churches, good preachers, and twenty-minute sermons.

"'And now,' asked the Spirit, 'are you satisfied at last? Or is there something yet lacking to your happiness?'

"'Yes,' answered the human being; 'my conscience troubles me. Make that comfortable.'

"'That is the easiest thing of all,' said the Spirit; and thereupon he did away with the personal devil and gave the human being an easy-going summer and a hell that made a comfortable winter resort.

"At that the human being fell back into his easy chair and remarked, 'Really, my dear Spirit, you have made religion so comfortable that I shall hardly need think of it,'' and he buried himself in the Sunday newspaper.

"As for the Spirit, he began to float out of the window.

"'Where are you going?' asked the human being.

"'To see my father.' said the Spirit. 'He is dying.'

"'And who is your father?'

"'The Spirit of Nobility,' replied the Spirit of Modern Progress. He is on his last legs.'"

This is the nature of the modern relapse into Paganism. There is no Julian, filled with a passionate longing

for a vanished past. There is no Poggio, gloating over the dignity and beauty of an ancient literature. There is only a Nietzsche, a genius with unbalanced mind, raving against morality as well as religion, because it trammels the freedom of the spirit. Or there is a Maeterlinck returning to an arbitrary mysticism as the guide of life, shutting his eyes to Christianity as if it had never been. Or there is a Madame Blavatsky bringing the occultism of the East to supplant the religion of the West. Thus the return to Paganism is manifold; not a return to a particular system of Paganism—that is to go back now too far!—but a quiet ignoring of Christianity, a mingled dislike and contempt for the Christian Church, a repudiation of Christ, His Person, His work, and His teaching, above all His Cross, which again to the Greek of to-day is foolishness.

Thoughtful and intelligent Europe is now non-Christian. The working classes of Europe are anti-Christian. The Christian verities are dismissed; the Christian ideal is derided. The purity, the humility, the dependence on God, the hope of immortality, the belief in heaven, are to these moderns a weariness. What they want is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the vainglory of life.

What a phenomenon of our times is the life of Lafcadio Hearn! Brought up in the Levant and in Ireland, knowing Christianity only as Catholicism, he turned with a sick loathing from Christ and the Cross. As a boy he found pictures of the elder gods in a book and was ravished with them. He hated Christianity as ugly.

The words "pagan," "heathen," always suggested to him beauty and freedom and joy. He became a Japanese, and wrote brilliant descriptions of his adopted people. He hated the missionaries who brought them the Gospel. Married to a Japanese wife, he expected the recognition and love of his chosen countrymen.

He died in weary disappointment, rejected by the people to whom he had given his life. There is the forlorn image of our times. Christianity is rejected, but there is no substitute. Mrs. Besant astonishes the Hindoos by assuring them that their religion is the substitute for Christianity. Someone will presently commend Buddha to us, and build a joss-house in London. Enterprising Moslem missionaries would find a fair field in England, where the masses are quite free from any prejudice in favour of Christianity. And there is no doubt that if a classical architect would build a temple of Apollo, and shrines for Aphrodite, they would have their worshippers among the people who now spend their Sundays on the river or in motor cars, and the masses who now worship, if anywhere, in the public houses.

With the Pagan ideals come also the Pagan morals. I have before me an article in the *Publishers' Circular*, for January 18, 1908, entitled, "Education and Immoral Books." It is the bitter cry of the publishing trade, complaining of the toleration and approbation given to impure books; it asserts "a rising tide of iniquity in the shape of immoral literature, especially in English fiction." The modern Pagan revels and wallows in impurity. His heart empty of God, scornful of Christ, blaspheming the Holy Ghost, delights in tales

of immorality. His appetite is gross. Innuendoes do not suffice. He demands the particular and detailed account of the bestial and the obscene, that he may gloat over them. What can the publishers do? "The books sell because there are readers who want them, educated people; and their wants are supplied by educated people, writers, men and women; and the books are reviewed by educated reviewers."

For many centuries the Christian standard was accepted, though men fell below it. We were born into a society which expected us to be God-fearing, honest and pure, to serve one another in love, and to live as those who expect a judgement and an eternal life. But our children to-day are born into a changed world. They find no Christian atmosphere awaiting them. The glamour is not over the good, but over the evil. Pagan morals are not only practised but defended. Self-indulgence, vice, pride, lying, are shameless and unabashed.

Christians are a minority, derided by the intellectual, railed at by the workers, ignored by the fashionable. To be a Christian involves much of the same difficulty and persecution as it did in the days of Decius and Diocletian. There is no European emperor to persecute, but society, ubiquitous and omnipotent, is frankly *against Christ.*

It is not of course that Christianity is disproved. No fresh argument is brought against it. By the admission of the Pagan writers themselves

> "Still stands thy ancient sacrifice,
> A broken and a contirte heart."

The way of faith and hope and love, of self-sacrifice and

service, of justice and mercy and humility is as sure as ever. But it is become again a strait path leading to life, and few there be which find it. Christianity is as true as ever, Christ as indisputable, the Cross as manifest. But the age repudiates it all. The age wants money, and comfort, and amusements, and pleasant vices. It objects to any suggestion that life is earnest or that death is near, that we are sowing now for a reaping by-and-by, that we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.

For this result no doubt the Church is to blame. The Church is largely Pagan. In Catholic countries many people know nothing of the Christianity of the New Testament. They can only judge the religion by characteristics which have no place in Christianity, priestly practices and tyrannies, and rapacities, worship of Virgin and saints, and the like. In the Greek Church there is much to justify the impending revolt. I recall a feeling which came over me in Athens; after studying the noble remains of ancient art, the ruins of the Acropolis, the temple of Theseus and the sculptured reliefs of the Ceramicus, I felt a strange and sickening revolt againt the tawdry mummery of the Orthodox Church, which seemed not only lifeless but deadening. The commonness of this *ci-devant* Christianity stood in painful contrast with the splendours of Pericles, Pheidias and Socrates. The Pagan elements in our English Christianity, the worship of respectability, the caste distinctions, the ritual, the ignorance and mental poverty of the teachers; the tedium of preaching, and the hollowness of ceremonies; the unreality of much profession; and

the bigotry of much zeal; may largely excuse that relapse into Paganism which is manifest in England, though not in so advanced a stage as on the Continent.

What then is to be said in the present situation? Reader, you have to choose. Jesus or Barabbas? The Jews chose Barabbas, and the result of their choice appears to this day. In China it is, Christ or Confucius? And the company of those who choose Christ is presenting in China such a spectacle of renewed life and spiritual energy, that the hope of a Christian China rises high in the hearts of the closest observers.

Here in England the choice is, Jesus or Paganism. Undoubtedly the glamour is for the moment over the Paganism; Apollo and Aphrodite cast their seductive glances at you. Pan sits again by the river, blowing his pipe; and you feel in your blood the strange, earthy attraction of an outworn creed. But these gods are dead, while Jesus lives. The choice is essentially now as ever between death and life. The glamour of Paganism, whatever its form, whether it is indulgence of the flesh, or the dream of a Christless art, covers decay, degradation and death. But Jesus has the words of eternal life; He has the note of the eternal world. He frankly invites you to take up a cross to follow Him, but the way of the cross is the way of light and of life.

It cannot be too bluntly stated, that the choice has to be made. Broad is the way that leads to death, and many walk in it. Strive to enter in at the strait gate.

In this connection long argument is useless. We can only display the contrast and the choice, and each

must choose for himself. The issue was stated in the plainest terms from the beginning of Christianity. It cannot be better stated now. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."[1]

Intrinsically nothing more can be said. The Paganism of our day is only the recrudescence of the world in its eternal antagonism to the Father, a recrudescence due to the astonishing discoveries of powers and possessions, which seem to offer to mankind unbounded physical enjoyment. But it is a delusion. The piles of money, the indulgence of the appetites, bring no more satisfaction to-day than they did to Petronius or Apicius. The motor car can no more offer permanent delight than the chariot in which the Roman noble drove furiously along the Appian Way.

The world cannot satisfy your heart, because you are God's children; only your Father can satisfy your heart. The world, with its infinite variety of beauty and interest, for the individual at any rate, is evanescent. It fades as you behold it, because the eye grows dim, and the heart sickens.

The alternative is Jesus, because Jesus brings you to God. He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. And you have to choose.

[1] 1 JOHN ii. 15-17.

Jesus means the discovery of your sin, the confession and the contrition, the forgiveness and the deliverance from your sin. Jesus means cleansing, and reconciliation to God, the filial relation restored and realised. Jesus means living in the world as the child of God, and expecting in the world to come the house with the many mansions. That is the way of the Cross. It is light and life, though it seems to be darkness and mortification.

This you can choose, as against the world. It is—Pan or Jesus? It is—Christ or Diana? It cannot be both; it is essentially and eternally one or the other. If it is not Jesus it is Pan. If it is not Christ it is Diana or Aphrodite. If it is not the Father it is the world.

Write out the words which were just quoted: "Love not the world," etc. Put them up where the alternative meets you morning by morning, as you awake. Face that alternative resolutely and persistently. Press it upon the mental retina. The Father or the world? Which is it to be?

The young man in the Gospels had that alternative presented to him. He chose the world. He had great possessions. He could not bring himself to part with them for Jesus. Jesus loved him, and was grieved for him, but could not help him. He had chosen. Look at Watts' picture of that man. How rich is his dress, how stately is his mien. But where is the face? It is averted, it is hidden in shame. For the choice is made.

So exactly you have to choose. There is the world,

and no doubt it has its attractions, its fascinations. There is the music and the laughter, and the stage is all aglow. There are the dances and the dinners, the marriages, the entertainments. At a first glance you are naturally ravished by it. You are tempted to choose it. And the alternative? The Son of Man on a Cross dying for the sins of the world, your sin! Who would choose that suffering form; who would not be scandalised by the Cross? How can you wish by that rude instrument to let the world, the beautiful world, be crucified to you, and yourself crucified to it?

And yet that is the choice which you are counselled to make. As truly as ever in the past: "This world is all a fleeting show, for man's illusion given." The veil of Maya is over it all. You trust it, you lean on it, and it breaks through. You follow it with eager hands, and it vanishes like the mirage.

And that cross covers all reality, peace, purity, love, joy, satisfaction. The cross crucifies your sins, but brings you to your Father. The cross averts your eyes from the delights of the world, to fix them on the one joy that is, and that lasts.

Can you choose? Will you choose? In face of the vast apostasy, and an almost universal rejection of Jesus, and choice of the world, will you choose Him? Will you believe? Will you leave your sins and yourself to follow Him? As you make the choice, as the decision is registered in your mind, and your heart turns wholly to Him, what a wonderful thing happens! What is this strange sense of pardon, purification and victory, this discovery of the goal and the home, the

bosom of the Father? What is this delighted recognition of the meaning of life, the work to do, the things to seek? What is this inward fountain of cleansing and power?

This is that gift of the Holy Spirit which is imparted to those who believe in Him, the specific, promised seal of the soul's reconciliation and acceptance with God.

Now in your newly found joy—the scales fallen from your eyes—look again at the world and its gods. Did that tinsel show attract you? Did those hollow images covering the uncleanness appear beautiful? It seems almost incredible. Beauty, truth, and love are everywhere; but they are not of the world. It has passed away: they remain.

> "He that hath felt the spirit of the highest
> Cannot confound or doubt him or deny,
> Yea with one breath, O world, though thou deniest,
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I."

XV

THE OLD PROBLEM OF SUFFERING AND SIN

It is a very old problem. And in discussing the difficulties of religious thought some time ago, I omitted it, from the feeling that here we have an insoluble difficulty, a primal mystery which wise men face as a fact, though they despair of explaining it. But I was immediately reminded by several people that this ancient difficulty is still the most pressing of difficulties. The human mind cannot accept it and pass on. There is suffering in the world; how can God be kind? There is sin in the world, how can God be good?

Here a mind set on denial and unbelief finds ample material. It has only to collect countless instances of evil, physical evil, or moral evil, and to say: "This is the world, which is the work of your beneficent and holy God! Either He is not all powerful, or He is not good. If He were good and powerful He could not tolerate this. Which of us would inflict on any creature, however mean, the misery which life and death, the universe as it is—or, as your Christian doctrine implies, God—inflicts on human beings?"

That argument is so forcible and so plausible that in its first impact, it carries conviction to many, especially the young. The infidel has an easy task. The material

at hand is inexhaustible. And in every human heart there is a ready response to infidelity.

But suppose it occurs to us to retort on the infidel: "You have given an appalling picture of the evil of the world, the pain which men endure, the sins which they commit. Do we understand you to argue from this that there is no God, or that there is a God, who, as the author of this evil, is a fiend?

"You imply that there is no God? Then there is no Being who pities us in our evil plight, or can help us out of it, or cares if we remain in it for ever. You present to us a universe, unconscious, immoral, a vast machine, which without intelligence or purpose grinds out for us this miserable existence which you depict. There is no escape, there is no redress. What, then, is your gospel? What do you propose? You have taken pains to show us that life is a scene of pain and wickedness, and there is no God. What is there, then? In short, there is *you*, you the infidel. You offer yourself to us with your fierce invectives against life and God, as the substitute for religion, as the highest and noblest product of the universe. We cannot pretend to be grateful to you. Nay, we heartily wish you to take yourself off. We know our sufferings and sins without your help; and you have no remedy, no alleviation to offer.

"Or, you imply that there is a God, or there are Gods; but they or He are devils, working to produce this world of suffering and sin. Is that your implication? If it is not, what do you mean? What is the purpose of your

argument? Well, then, your gospel is, that we live in a devil-made and devil-ruled world. Thank you for nothing. O eloquent and convincing infidel lecturer, you are, then, after all, only a missionary of devils, bent on asserting their reign. Your gospel is the good news of hate instead of love, of despair instead of hope. What help can you give us in our misery? What power has your truth, or negation, to make either life or death feasible and worthy for us? If this is all you have to say, poor son of Adam, and advocate of devils, why not hold your peace, and fret out your fury in silence and solitude?"

Thus the argument of infidelity is only powerful until one attempts to retort. When the positive effects of denial are realised, the hollowness and futility of that kind of argument appears. Perhaps, therefore, no wise person who is perfectly sane ever thinks of advancing the argument of infidelity. In this mysterious and difficult world, with its deep shadows and bewildering cross-lights, we are all bent on finding a clue, a light, a practical guide, to help not ourselves only, but others. And we know, without evidence, that no such help is even conceivable unless Reason rules the Universe, unless that Reason is good, unless it is love, unless it is working out a final good through all forms of evil. Whatever therefore can help us to faith in such a moral order, or such a ruler of life and destiny, we verily thankfully hail. Whatever impels us to throw our own personal energy into the cause of the Reason, the goodwill, the love, the beneficent purpose of the Universe, is very welcome to us.

What works in the opposite direction is morbid and poisonous.

In a shipwreck a man who goes about representing the terrors of the deep, the parting planks, and the watchful sharks, would deserve to be thrown over to them. The only man wanted by his fellows is he who inspires hopes, who mans the boats, fits on the lifebelts, and points to the shore within sight.

Our condition in life, according to that presentation of evil which constitutes the difficulty under discussion, is that of a shipwrecked crew. The welcomest person therefore is he who breathes hope and courage, speaks of remedies, and directs our thought to the security of the shore.

Now approaching the problem in this way, my first observation is, that it is mischievous to exaggerate the pain and sin in the world. We must always remember that pain is here only in conjunction with pleasure, and sin only in conjunction with goodness. No scientific observer can isolate either of the pair of contrasts. The relative proportion of good and evil is a subject of dispute. There is the easy optimism of Leibnitz or of Emerson which believes that this is the best of all *possible* worlds. There is, on the other hand, the gloomy pessimism of Schopenhauer, which sees the solution of human problems only in the extinction of the human race. These are the extremes into which genius and unbridled speculation run. But the vast preponderance of men, probably ninety-nine out of a hundred, are neither optimists nor pessimists. Taking

life as it comes, and estimating life as a whole, they show that they think it good by the way they cling to it, and, except in gloomy moments, they admit that the pleasure far outweighs the pain, the good decidedly exceeds the evil.

If we could direct a *questionnaire* to the human race, on these two points: Is there more pain or pleasure in the world? Is man good or evil? The answer would certainly be overwhelming. At any given moment the vast majority of human beings are not in pain; they are even enjoying more or less of pleasure. In every community the good are more than the bad; and even in the bad there is enough good to make us hesitate in classifying them. Instinctively we find a good even in evil,

> "hearing oftentimes
> The still sad music of humanity,
> Not harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
> To chasten and subdue."

Instinctively we anticipate that pleasure will follow pain; instinctively we assume that moral evil is transitory and will result in final good.

"All that is good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more." It would be impossible to make humanity as a whole accept any other view. Pain is only the drawback to life which is in the main pleasureable. Evil is only the shadow of a good which is essentially light.

The idea of pain being the constant and general state of human life is morbid, the result of a hypersensitiveness, and a want of balance. Here is a wise

judgement from a current book, "The Comments of Bagshot"[1]:—

"A year later he was seriously ill of pneumonia, with various painful complications, and I find another note about his sensations a few weeks after his recovery: I am told (he says) that my sufferings were horrible to witness and the nurse dwells particularly on my struggles for breath. Of those I was completely unconscious, and I am not aware of having even suffered discomfort in breathing. Other things were temporarily painful, but the memory of them has so far faded from my mind that it is scarcely to be weighed against the recollection of one sunny hour. The idea of pain is constantly before us because a few people out of a vast number are always suffering from accidents and diseases which are described in newspapers or talked about by their friends. This produces the illusion that pain is a constant factor in everybody's life. It is, on the contrary, but a rare incident in the lives of the vast majority."

That is the language of all sane and wholesome humanity.

Reader, I beg you to ask yourself: How many of the days you have lived have been free from pain? Or if you are one of the very few who have pain as a frequent, nay, constant companion, have you not found a compensation in it, the moral growth which it has brought you, or the joy in the sympathy and help of others? On the whole, those who make much of pain as an argument against God are not they who suffer it; they who suffer it will more frequently find in it an argument for Him, because it has driven them to Him and has opened up for them the fountains of consolation.

Still, making all allowance for exaggeration or misinterpretation, the Spectre of Pain is always with us, nor is it given to every one to recognise in it an Angel.

[1] p. 50, by J. A. Spender.

The question which it raises cannot be dismissed; nay, it should be held steadily in the mind. Nature indiscriminately injures human beings by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, lightning, accidents, and epidemics. Even the best of men suffer from excruciating disease. Helpless children suffer through the neglect or callousness of others. A lad of eleven the other day was setting off to work, and was taken ill. "I must go," he said. For the family depended on this child. In three days he was in his coffin. Pathetic boy martyr! Has anything more heroic been done on battlefields or in the gleaming lists of fame?

Nor is the anguish of heart or mind less than the suffering of the body. There are always women weeping and wringing their hands for those who will never come back to the shore. There are the vast households of orphans. There are lovers separated by death:

> "No later light has lightened up my heaven,
> No second morn has ever shone for me;
> All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
> All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee."

There are the dull aching pains of anxiety for those we love. There is the numbing anguish caused by their treachery or misconduct; the ear listening for the unsteady step of a husband or father, the shame and torture when disgrace has fallen on the home. Always the prudent and thrifty are suffering for the extravagance and self-indulgence of others. Everywhere is a poison in human life, distilled from venomous tongues, uncharitable judgments and subtle slanders.

When we are suffering, or when we are dwelling on

the sufferings of others, it is possible, surely it is venial, to regard the Spectre of Pain as a malignant being, that with a brutal or insane callousness puts nerve and brain on the rack, till humanity tosses on a bed of anguish crying in the morning, Would God it were even! and in the evening, Would God it were day!

> "As troubled seas
> That surging beat the shore,
> We throb and heave
> Ever and evermore."

And this glimpse at human pain leads us insensibly to the darker problem of human sin. Though we maintain the view that good preponderates over evil, evil is vast, terrible enough. Though we call the darkness only the shadow or the privation of life, darkness it is "black as the pit from pole to pole." The attempt to minimise sin by giving it other names is not in the long run successful. It is only made by the shallow, and appeals to the shallow. If their souls deepen, the whole argument seems to be a mockery.

Men are selfish and cruel to one another. They cheat and lie and steal. They quarrel and fight and hate. The strong oppress the weak. The sensual ruin the innocent. Some years ago there was a theatre in London, at which, as was admitted in theatrical circles, the girls employed had no chance of success unless they yielded to the amatory advances of the management. Men ruin women and trample them in the mire; the ruined women retaliate by tempting other men. Men ill-use and beat the wives whom they have sworn to love. Women blacken each other's character,

and torture even their own children. In many workshops the blasphemy and obscenity are such that a pure man lives in torture. In many counting-houses, colleges, or other resorts of young men, the talk and the practices blacken and defile the innocent lives that are brought into the corrupt society. There is no special advantage in giving mild names to this bestial, selfish, blasphemous, Godless element of human life. There is a fibrous growth of positive sin all through human society.

"Oh, the offence is rank: it smells to heaven."

Granting then that pain and sorrow and sin are a constant, though not a preponderant, ingredient of human life, and frankly recognising that the mystery of it is not explained, and may indeed be intentionally inexplicable while we remain in the present state of probation, we see that the business of a man in this world is to do what lies in his power to mitigate, lessen, or render more tolerable, the sorrow and the pain, and to vanquish and abolish the sin.

But if we ask, what is there in the world which can shed any light on the problem, do anything to mitigate the evil, or hold out any prospect of its ultimate abolition, we suddenly realise that the Christian religion is the one factor of human life which offers any hope of relief and deliverance. It came into the world to bring this hope, it has worked by the hope, it has shown that by hope we are saved. Christianity might even be defined as "the best explanation, the most effectual alleviation, and the one promise of the complete destruction, of sorrow and pain and sin."

The Problem of Suffering and Sin

Amiel once described the religion of Christ as "a ray of divine light traversing human life." The description is just and offers a deserved rebuke to those self-confident dogmatists, the Gnostics whether Catholic or Protestant, who speak as if the light had abolished the darkness, answered all the questions and solved all the problems. No, the mystery hangs over things; we know but little; we push our knowledge in any direction, only to find behind it a vast unknown. If anyone volunteered to explain the mystery, and to show the reason of pain, sorrow and sin, fully and completely, we should regard him as insane. For this one point seems proved, after the futile search of several millenniums, that human existence is deliberately involved in unfathomable mystery, which can never be solved in this world. Perhaps even the purpose of the mystery is to keep the mind of man constantly expectant of the life beyond. "Here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face—there shall we know even as we are known."

But in this life of shadowy mystery by far the clearest and most lasting ray of light is the Gospel of Christ. It was called the good news because it brought light. Christ unhesitatingly presented himself as the Light of the World.

Let us review in a few sentences the nature of the explanation, relief, or solace, which Christ brought to human suffering and pain, and the way in which Christ dealt with human sin. Each fresh effort of realisation brings out more clearly that Christ's object was to overthrow this dominion of evil, which we are bound to recognise in the world.

In the matter of suffering and pain, so far as that is physical, Christ came as a Healer. For some generations after his departure, as Harnack has shown,[1] the healing work of Jesus was continued in the Church, and it was one great cause of the expansion of Christianity. The remarkable spread of "Christian Science" is due to the rediscovery of this practical side of Christian truth. "Himself bore our infirmities," says the evangelist after describing a course of marvellous cures, and the quotation from the prophet is the one on which we rely to show that He bore our sins. He bore our sins by dying for them, but He bore our diseases while He lived, by healing them. As the Church is called on to administer the pardon of sins, so it is her duty to administer the healing of disease. Both powers are stored in the Person and work of Christ. So far as the ministry of Christ is genuine it will be the reproduction of Christ Himself, "who healeth all our diseases, and pardoneth all our iniquities."

Christian medicine and surgery have done much to mitigate and prevent human pain. But the science and art of healing have in modern Europe become too divorced from the spiritual method of Christianity, to fulfil in any adequate sense the Christian mission of healing. It is time that we should recur to apostolic methods, and heal disease through Christ, by faith and prayer.

But apart from the healing of disease, Christ mitigated all human pain by suffering the extremity of it himself. We are able to bear acute anguish by

[1] "Expansion of Christianity," vol. i., 122, 149, 167.

turning our thought to the sufferings of Christ. For nineteen centuries Christians have been patient in suffering, and have quieted their hearts, by remembering: "this is nothing to what Christ bore for me."

And further the example of Christ suffering has given a spiritual meaning to pain. If Christ was made perfect through suffering, we may be very ready to fill up the measure of His sufferings, on the way to His perfection.

It will be found in all genuinely Christian circles and Christian hearts, that pain is transfigured. There is no doubt that the suffering is working peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. Christians

> "Reach a hand through time to grasp
> The far-off interest of tears."

So far, then, as the world is truly Christian, pain is overcome, that is to say, it is either relieved and abolished, or it is interpreted in such a way as to be a means of spiritual growth and blessing. If all people were truly Christian, the problem of pain, so far as humanity is concerned, would be solved. The vast proportion of diseases would be healed; the suffering which remains would be heartily and thankfully accepted as the means of accomplishing great results. As the lifeboat man faces the yeasty surges, or as the fireman enters the flaming rooms, all men would approach heroically inevitable pain, persuaded, through Christ, that their purpose is redemptive.

But turning to the problem of sin, we are bound to confess that the object of Christianity is to deal with it by destroying it. The name Jesus was interpreted as

"He would save His people from their sins." The purpose has been confused by ecclesiastical dogma. Rome has completely obscured Christianity in this respect. She has led men to think that Christianity only proposes to save men from the punishment of their sins, and not from the sins themselves. The Roman method is to save men not from, but in, their sins. So far from holding out any hope of salvation in the Christian sense here and now, it preaches a purgatorial cleansing, to be prolonged through centuries in the after-life, before salvation can be claimed.

But every student of the New Testament knows that this is the negation of the Christian Gospel. The sacrifice of Christ on the Cross offered to every believer the forgiveness of sins past, and the renewal of the soul, resulting in a perpetual victory over sin. As sin is condemned and overcome by the offering of Christ once for all, the Christian who heartily believes this enters into a victory already attained. He is a new creature in Christ, and he proceeds to live the life in which sin no longer has dominion over him.

It is this concrete change of heart and character, this actual deliverance from sin in life and conduct, which is the gift of God to men in Christ Jesus. Nothing short of a heart in which sin is subdued is the gift which is given in Christ to the prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

It is the complete ignorance and denial of this truth in the Roman Church, which renders that Church at once so attractive to sinful men who desire to continue

in sin, and so destructive of Christianity, the whole object of which is to deliver men from their sins.

Dr. Griffith John[1] says that some of the Chinese converts "seem to clear the chasm which yawns between the old and the new life in one bound, and become at once new men in Christ." Such was Yü Ki-fang, who was sixty years of age at the time of his conversion. "His whole being was influenced by the truth from the beginning, and his entire character was ennobled and purified. His life seemed to me to be as spotless as that of any Christian I have ever met with, whether in China or out of China." It was his meat and drink to do Christ's work. When death approached he was radiant and triumphant. "My sins are great," he said, "but I have a great Saviour. I die embracing the Cross."

This is what Christ does, wherever He is truly preached and simply believed. He came, as He said, to destroy the works of the devil. He could say, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."

All the torments and sufferings which result from sin —and we only hinted at them in the most sketchy way just now—are overcome by the removal of sin, and by that only. When men and women are new creatures in Christ, they love one another, they help and bless each other, they are helpers of each other's joy. A community composed of men like Yü Ki-fang, or that Pastor Hsi, of whom Miss Geraldine Guinness has told the matchless story, would be happy in life, trustful in death, progressive in this world, hopeful of eternal

[1] "A Voice from China," p. 207.

progress hereafter. And this is the work of Christ's Gospel; it has produced and it produces those in whom sin is vanquished, those therefore who are in the world as salt that saves it from corruption, and even, like their Master, as the light of the world.

It is, of course, a misfortune that the vast number of merely nominal and professional Christians, who are strangers to the saving work of Christ, eclipses the Christian truth. But the truth is there: "the ray of divine light traversing human life" produces men and women who are pure and true, full of love and self-sacrificing service. They are always warring against and subduing sin. They are the unfailing witnesses to the sinlessness of that future life, which *they* will, and all might, enter at death.

Thus Christianity, if not, in its evidences or its manifest effects, all that we should be inclined to demand, is in its practical working by far the most complete and effectual solace, mitigation and remedy of human pain and disease, and the only tested power of vanquishing human sin, with which we are acquainted. To reject Christ, therefore, as some humanitarians seem to do, on the ground that evil is incompatible with a belief in God as love, is surely a most illogical and misguided course. By so doing you do not in the least mitigate the evil, you only dismiss the one power which can overcome it. The more intensely we feel the sorrow and sin of the world, the more earnestly and consistently we shall avail ourselves of the one remedy. The more painfully we recognise the darkness, the more diligently we shall abide in the traversing ray of light.

There has been one other attempt to explain and defeat the evil of the world, which, in point of the width of its influence, challenges comparison with Christianity. That is Buddhism. It has been fitly described as the Light of Asia. But the more searching the comparison instituted between the two religions, the more convinced does the student become in calling Christianity the Light of the World.

For, how dim is the light of Asia! Practically how dark and unrelieved is the misery of the millions who know only Buddha, and not Christ! Hard and cruel is the human heart in China and Japan, notwithstanding the ubiquitous figure of Buddha! And how could it be otherwise? The impassive image, always seated, gazing with blank eyes, not at man or at God, but only within, offers small comfort to human sorrow or sin. Buddha set out to save the world, but ended in only saving himself, and only doing that by finding the loss of consciousness in Nirvana. This is essentially the doctrine of Schopenhauer: pessimism. The one cure of life's misery and sin is to escape from being.

Christ set out to save the world by sacrificing Himself, by seeking not His own, and He opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. He did not come like Buddha, to rid men of life, but that they might have life and have it more abundantly. Thus Christ has the promise of the future, a promise of the life which now is, and also of that which is to come. The wise man will, with Peter, say to Him: "Lord, to whom shall we go? for thou hast the words of eternal life."

XVI

ATONEMENT

THE doctrines of atonement which have had vogue in the Church have not been able to satisfy the growing intelligence of faith. Thus it has frequently happened that, while the truth of Christ's atoning Cross has always been held as central, the explanation of it in one age has been the most serious obstacle to accepting it in the next. Mr. Campbell, in his trenchant and fearless way, has poured ridicule on the doctrine of Atonement which prevailed half a century ago, and found expression in many of our popular hymns. Preachers less trenchant and fearless hesitate to handle roughly the word which they first heard from the lips of saintly parents and preachers who are gone, and seek, by presenting a positive doctrine of the Atonement, to win men imperceptibly from the crude and contradictory ideas of the past.

But Mr. Campbell's method, as iconoclasm generally, is justified, if souls are kept from Christ and from reconciliation with God by a partial or an illogical or an immoral statement of the truth. If the ground is cumbered by dead roots, it may be necessary to blast them out before a crop can be sown.

For my own part, I would rather try to present the Atonement positively, and to commend it to every

man's conscience in the sight of God, than engage in a refutation of decayed dogmas. After all, these false and limited doctrines do eventually die. Probably no one in Christendom now accepts the idea, which yet held an undisputed authority in the Church for a thousand years, that Christ was offered as a ransom to the devil, to buy off the souls which were justly in his power through sin, with the grotesque addition that God tricked the devil, because when he had accepted the death of Christ as a bait, he found that he could not permanently keep Him.

To the orthodoxy of to-day this orthodoxy of the pre-Anselmic period probably sounds not only immoral, but ridiculous.

Even Anselm's view has ceased to command the assent of the modern world, and the other speculations, Macleod Campbell's, Dale's, Moberly's, Scott Lidgett's, have never taken captive the Church as a whole. They rise and fall. What is crude and false eventually disappears.

I will not, therefore, spend any time in reviewing or criticising the theories of Atonement. I will only make two or three preliminary statements to clear the ground.

(1) God did not punish the Innocent in place of the guilty, and does not forgive the guilty because He has punished the Innocent.

Such an idea is immoral, and is unjustified by scripture or conscience.

(2) There is no Atonement so objective that it works as a means of salvation, apart from the faith and the moral regeneration of the sinner.

Antinomianism is utterly repugnant to all Biblical theology.

(3) There is no schism between God the Father and the Son. The Son does not interpose between God's wrath and man. On the contrary, the saving transaction originated in God Himself. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

These are the irrefragable canons of Scripture, reason and conscience, which no doctrine of Atonement must violate; because doctrines of Atonement have violated one or another of them, they have become untenable, injurious, a hindrance to faith. More and more the trained moral sense rejects the dogma that God would excuse the sinner from punishment, because that punishment is inflicted on Jesus. There is no moral grip in such a theory; it attempts to save us by an assertion which is essentially opposed to the ethical sense; the salvation produced by it cannot, therefore, be ethical. A father, accepting such a theory, and knowing that he is to be an imitator of God, would attempt to reform an offending child, by inflicting the punishment on the good child. That would be revolting to child and father and everyone else. It is an impiety to attribute to the Heavenly Father what we should count it an incivility to attribute to our fellowmen.

More and more the ethical sense of the Church demands that Atonement should not be such as encourages us to continue in sin. Antinomianism is no longer tolerable, whether it clothes itself in Calvinistic

or Arminian dress. So far as the doctrine of Atonement has sanctioned it or given excuse for it, we all to-day unhesitatingly pronounce that doctrine untrue.

Still more does the best theology of our time, whether it be the reasoned theology of the schools or the instinctive practical theology of Church and home and mart, revolt against that libel on God, which represents Christ as intervening to save us from His wrath. The God who has so been presented ceases to be an object of love. A swift Nemesis comes to those who entertain the libel. Catholicism holding that Christ saved us from God, and teaching that Christ is God, soon required someone to save us from Christ. Mary and the saints intercede for man with the Divine Judge—for such in Catholicism the Saviour becomes. If God is righteousness and Christ is mercy, before long both mercy and righteousness disappear from the Godhead, and man's hope rests again in weak creatures of his own kind, who at least may pity if they cannot save their fellows.

We are not then attempting to criticise old theories, nor to suggest another of our own. We shall not even try to present the orthodox doctrine of the day in any exhaustive fashion. But recognising and avoiding the errors which have made the Atonement incredible and repulsive, we will try to look afresh, and with modern eyes, at the facts presented in the New Testament, and see if the Atonement, as it appears there, is not as conformable to our conscience, our moral sense, as it is obviously necessary and essential to our salvation.

The point at which the problem can be most easily

approached is this: If God is a pardoning God, delighting to have mercy, longing to forgive sinful men, what is it that stands in the way of that free forgiveness to which His love prompts Him? Obviously the difficulty is, that a free forgiveness makes light of sin. Sin appears a mere fault or infirmity which mercy can overlook. But if sin is so slighted, the sorrow for it decreases, the desire to escape it is lessened, the authority for pardon disappears; and one who is not sorry for sin, does not desire to escape from it, and will not seek pardon, cannot be forgiven. In this way a free forgiveness may prevent men from being forgiven.

That this result is not imaginary, is seen in the Koran, and in Mohammedanism as a working religion. In the Koran God is "the most merciful of those who show mercy." Such is His mercy, that the Moslem is persuaded he will not visit on him his iniquities. Relying, therefore, on the mercy of God, he continues in sin. A Mohammedan society is honeycombed with moral corruption; a stable and just government becomes impossible. And this results from the idea of God as merciful, who by forgiving sin makes light of it.

Something of the same kind is manifest in the modern world, where the decay of Christian faith has led to the slighting of sin. Nowhere is sin so prevalent and so disastrous as in men who deny it, and profess that they do not feel it. The absence of a sense of sin is invariably a gauge of the extent and destructiveness of sin. On the other hand, the sense of sin, the revolt from it, the hatred of it, are the steps to the deliverance

from it. And, paradoxical as it may seem, they who are most delivered from it are most conscious of it, while they who are most in bondage to it, are most incredulous of it.

> "Till life is coming back, our death we do not feel.
> Light must be entering in our darkness to reveal."

It would seem, then, that forgiveness of sin can only be real and efficacious if it is accompanied by the unequivocal condemnation of sin, so that the forgiveness deepens the sense of sin, excites the desire to escape from it, and plants in the mind a fixed abhorrence of it.

Now let the reader, remembering the conditions under which we live, viz., the invisibility of God, and the difficulty of learning and conceiving His will, ask himself, how in this sphere of human life, in the plane of our present experience, God was to make clear to men that He condemned sin absolutely and unequivocally, and yet that He would freely forgive it; that He would and righteously could forgive it, because it was so absolutely and unequivocally condemned.

The necessity that sin must be condemned in being forgiven will become perfectly plain on reflection. The conclusion is inevitable. But *how* sin can be forgiven and condemned by God, how it can be recognised as exceeding sinful and yet forgiven, how it can be forgiven and yet absolutely and unequivocally condemned, will be found a problem which passes the wit of man.

We can think of sins recognised as evil, condemned, and punished, and then remitted because they are adequately

punished. That indeed is the usual course of dealing with the problem in human affairs.

We can also think of a free forgiveness which opens all prisons, remits all debts and sacrifices. That is a course from which we instinctively shrink, because we cannot conceive such a forgiveness as producing anything but an aggravation of crimes, debts and offences of all kinds.

But at once to forgive and to condemn, to pass sentence upon sin and yet to pardon, the mind cannot readily, nor even by any effort, reach a solution of this problem.

Now the solution presented in the Gospel, the fact which justifies the title of "good news," is one which only escapes our wonder, and acceptance, and gratitude, because it is so essentially unlike any human thought or device. It bears the Divine stamp, because it could never have entered the heart of man. Now, according to the Gospel, the Divine solution was this: God sent His Son into the world, to live a human life. Genuinely free, He grew up among men from infancy to manhood in a thoroughly human way. As a boy He was bent on doing His Father's will. With His maturity of mind and body came the call of His life. He recognised—as the Gospel narratives enable us to see—His mission. The question was, Would He voluntarily face a death which would be the condemnation of human sin? Would He be made sin for man? Would He hang on the cross, and receive in Himself the shame, the guilt, the suffering of sin, so that for ever sin would stand condemned in the flesh? He faced the problem; with unveiled eyes He saw what it involved. The cup which

was given to Him He drank. He recognised that it was the Father's will, that His life and death were the appointment of the Father's love to men, that sin might be condemned in the flesh. Deliberately and triumphantly He fulfilled His mission, and said "It is finished."

What the condemnation of sin in each sinful soul would mean becomes evident: it would mean death. If sin were to be condemned in that way all would die. The condemnation of sin would be found only in the death of all, and forgiveness would be meaningless.

But the voluntary, conscious and deliberate self-offering of Jesus to bear the condemnation of sin for men, was a complete condemnation of sin in the flesh. In the light of that fact, a fact initiated, approved and accepted by God Himself, no one could think that He condoned sin. No one could make light of sin. It was deicide, because it slew Jesus.

But sin thus openly and absolutely condemned once for all, God could freely forgive sinners who believed in Jesus. If they believed in Him, they would not make light of sin. Forgiveness coming in that way would condemn sin in Him, and commit them to renounce it, to hate it, to avoid it. Thus free forgiveness through the Cross would be the overcoming and destruction of sin, and would lead to a life free from it. The love of God, which would save by forgiving, found in this way the means of fulfilling the beneficent purpose.

It will be seen then how Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and how God sent Him to be the propitiation.

He was the voluntary and sacrificing sin-offering, who once and for all, in the Eternal Spirit, received the condemnation of sin in Himself, in order that men might be freely forgiven. He was so at one with God, that the act was essentially God's own. The crisis of the suffering which produced the cry: "My God! My God! why hast thou forsaken me?" was the necessary spasm of receiving into Himself the condemnation of sin. But the parting from God, thus voluntarily incurred, was a suffering to God no less than to Christ.

When an Italian mother gave her sons to die for the redemption of Italy, her suffering was equal to that of the soldiers who fell. It could not but be so. When God gave His only-begotten Son to hang on the Cross and suffer, at the hands of sinful men, the anguish and the death which were the condemnation of sin, God suffered with Him. Only by that anguish taken into the Divine heart, could sin be condemned. Only if sin could be so condemned could men truly be forgiven.

But, so mistaken has been the doctrine of propitiation taught in the Church, that the very word creates a sense of uneasiness, or even of dislike in many minds. "I forgive my enemy," says one, "without propitiation: why should not God forgive me in the same way?" Or "I forgive my children without any expiation; surely the Heavenly Father could forgive us as readily as I forgive my children." But in the light of what has been said, we may venture to ask: Do you really forgive your enemy without propitiation? Must he not recognise and acknowledge his offence, express his

regret, and his wish to be reconciled to you, as well as his resolution not to repeat the offence? This is of course, as between man and man, equally fallible and faulty, all the propitiation that is necessary; but it is a propitiation. And if you forgive your enemy without that necessary propitiation, what good effect will it have upon him? If he remains convinced that he is in the right, and you are in the wrong, if he cherishes the same resentment and intends to act in the same way again, your forgiveness is nullified. He rejects it and flouts it. That is to say, there is strictly speaking no forgiveness at all. And so with your child; you do not forgive him without expiation. If you are a wise parent, you punish his fault with the utmost exactitude. Only when he sees that it was wrong, is obviously sorry, and promises not to do it again, do you forgive him. If you are foolish enough to forgive without this kind of expiation, you are certainly heading your child towards moral disaster.

But, if it be said, Why then cannot God forgive us, on the expression of our repentance and sorrow and resolution to amend? we must remember that the case between man and God is necessarily different from that between man and man. Men are equally faulty; they cannot sit in judgement on one another. Even a father cannot exact anything from his children on the ground of his superior goodness; his heart sickens within him as he recognises that his children's sins have been in him before.

But between man and God it is otherwise. The debt is due to God. He is the inflexible holiness,

which cannot endure iniquity. That holiness is the throne and pillar of the universe. It must assert itself even in the act of forgiving. To forgive in such a way as to derogate from that holiness, to depreciate or infringe it, would be a disaster indeed to that moral order which is the essential principle, the one hope, of the world. The propitiation, therefore, between man and God must be, not only, as between man and man, repentance and the purpose to amend, but the recognition of the absolute and transcendent holiness of God. And that propitiation as we have seen could only have been made by the sinless Son voluntarily taking upon Himself the condemnation of human sin.

And perhaps it should be added that, as between man and the invisible and the unknown God, there is the greatest difficulty in producing any real repentance, contrition or resolution to amend. It was the manifestation of Jesus, as the Son of God bearing the sins of the world, which first worked in men that genuine sorrow for sin and longing to be rid of it which, according to the view of the objector, should be the sufficient propitiation for God. No, even *that* propitiation, such as occurs frequently between man and man, was not possible between man and God until it was wrought in man by the good news that God has sent forth His Son to be a propitiation for our sins.

We are not then indulging in an idle dogmatism, but we are stating a fact of reason and experience, when we say that only through the Cross of Christ can men

be really forgiven. Apart from that, they may have a theory of Divine forgiveness, they may maintain that God ought to forgive, or will forgive, but they cannot be actually forgiven, because without the Cross of Christ there is nothing which offers at once the condemnation of sin and its forgiveness, the forgiveness based on the condemnation, and unless sin is condemned as it is forgiven it is never realised as sin and therefore never really forgiven. If anyone objects to this as a narrow and exclusive doctrine, I am content to put to him the question: "Are *you* forgiven?" And, if he says "Yes," I shall venture to ask, "What objective ground have you for believing that you are?" Certainly he will be unable to mention any. But in that case, his forgiveness is purely subjective; that is, he is not forgiven by God, he only forgives himself; which is indeed a collapsible position.

No, there is no other name given among men whereby they may be saved. There is no solid, objective, and satisfying ground of Divine forgiveness except the Cross of Christ.

But, on the other hand, while men can only be forgiven by the Cross, by the Cross all men can be forgiven. The self-offering of the Son of God for men is a fact of eternity, transacted in time. As the sufficient condemnation of sin is the free gift of God's forgiveness, it avails for all, just as the sun avails to light the whole earth, or the air avails to give all creatures breath. Whoever believes it can at once receive the pardon of God, and be reconciled to Him. The word of the Cross is sufficient for all men now living, and for all

who will live. If the 1,500,000,000 of the human race believed to-day in the truth of the Cross, in God's condemnation of all sin, and free forgiveness of it, the whole race would be born again, the kingdom of God would have come.

To bring all men to see and accept this truth is the object of all Christian preaching and of Christian missions. The truth is self-expansive, because directly a man believes in it and experiences its effect, he cannot but wish to communicate the good news to every creature. There is an extraordinary simplicity in the Christian Gospel, because it consists of one single piece of intelligence, viz., that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, because Christ voluntarily suffered the condemnation of sin, and therefore God can and does forgive everyone who believes in Him. But this simplicity of the Gospel includes everything. Out of it comes the true morality; from the true morality comes the right ordering of society; also from the true morality comes the comity of nations, the brotherhood of man, the peace of the world. Out of it again comes life eternal and the consummation of human and earthly things in a divine and heavenly order. If we start from the Cross, we shall reach the Crown.

This book has not been an attempt to state a Christian Theology; for such a task we should start from the point which we have now reached. Our object has been rather to meet the difficulties and remove the obstacles, which prevent the people of our time from coming to the Cross. But, as we close, we may in a

few general outlines show the light which radiates from the Cross, and the way in which the preaching of the Cross has to some extent already been, and must eventually to the full extent be, the salvation of mankind, the regeneration of the world.

When anyone receives forgiveness through the Cross, there are two things which immediately follow: (1) being saved by grace, he renounces the deadening idea of being saved by merit; (2) forgiven only by the condemnation of sin, he is committed to quit sin; the Cross which saves him crucifies sin in him, and him to sin; crucifies him to the world and the world to him.

Needless to say there is much nominal Christianity which does not show these results; but that is because forgiveness is either not received at all, or not received through the Cross, which is indeed much the same as not being received at all. But we will confine ourselves to the truth of the Gospel, and not turn aside to examine the misstatements or perversions of it.

Forgiven through the Cross we accept pardon and reconciliation with God as a free and wholly unmerited gift; we know it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by the grace of God bringing salvation to all, that we are saved. This is of priceless value, from an ethical point of view. For if we are saved, even in the remotest degree, by our merit, we cannot but have that measure of self-complacency and sense of virtue. Such complacency and sense of virtue is the worst of vices, the most deadening of human sins. But saved by the sheer grace of God,

forgiven simply because His sinless Son bore the condemnation of our sin, we are necessarily humbled, we can think nothing of ourselves. Our attention is directed exclusively to the righteousness of Him who died for us. Self is repulsive; we wish to see it crucified; we dwell only on the goodness of God in seeking and in forgiving us, and on the goodness of Christ, through which the Divine purpose of love was carried out. Thus in a manner Self, the egoism which is the root of all human misery and sin, is nailed to Christ's cross, is dead and buried. What rises from the tomb with Christ is a new creature altogether, an activity which is exercised entirely in the lines of Christ's life and character. The new man in Christ Jesus is a very specific phenomenon. It would be highly convenient if the term Christian were confined to those who are thus renewed. In the New Testament they are called saints. But that term is defiled with all ignoble use; it stands now only for sanctimoniousness, for a harsh asceticism, or for a sense of superiority to the sinful world. Practically the saint of to-day is the Pharisee of the New Testament. We cannot dream of reviving the dishonoured term. Neither can we without affectation confine the very general name, Christian, which is applied to the whole body of men who are brought up in a knowledge of the Christian religion, to the limited number who have the specific Christian experience. We are at a loss for a name. "The redeemed" would serve us well; but custom has attributed that title to those who have passed into the heavenly world.

We must be content to use a periphrasis, and speak of those who are forgiven through the Cross of Christ. These persons, under a great variety of church forms, and not infrequently apart from church forms altogether, are in the world as a saving influence, the one decisive element of hope, and means of cleansing. They leaven society. So far as there is any true and pure church in the world, as distinct from mere formalism and tyranny of church-organisation, it is due to them. These, it will invariably be found, are at the root of all social and political regeneration. These and these alone make for peace and international amity. On the growth of their number rests the hope of the world. As the Cross was in the midst of the world to be the means of the world's salvation, they who believe and are saved by it are the agents of its working in the world. The Cross breaks down the middle wall of partition, and it draws together in one the ransomed human family.

Churches and sects divide mankind. The Cross is only unitive. For though it seems to divide men into those who believe in it and are saved, and those who do not, it is not really so, because all who believe in it and are saved, are impelled by the love it creates in them to seek the salvation of the rest. Churches and sects produce an antagonism, even persecution, to those who are without. The Cross has the opposite effect; it makes men reach wide arms of love towards those who are without, to draw them in.

The theology of the Cross presents a God, who is holy love, love which will save all, but love which

means by saving, making men holy like itself. This God is at once above men and in them—above as their maker, as their sovereign, as their goal and exceeding great reward; in them, as a spirit of yearning which can never rest except in Him, which can never accept the separation of sin as final, which desires purity, because that is the one way of seeing God.

The theology of the Cross, painting sin in its true colours and delivering men from it, is the guarantee of moral progress here, and the promise of sinlessness hereafter. This world should be sinless; the world to come shall be. That is the inference of the Cross. Thus all who accept this truth are engaged in a lifelong struggle to subdue sin, and are supported by an indestructible hope of the world into which sin can by no means enter.

The theology of the Cross is sometimes supposed to have invented the grim images of Satan, and Hell and eternal torture. But indeed that is as if we were to charge the lifeboat with causing the wreck. Satan and Hell and eternal torture are the inevitable forms in which the experience of sin clothes itself. How far they represent objective realities, or how far they are simply the images of the sinful soul, the theology of the Cross does not attempt to determine. But taking those sorrowful and tormenting realities, which you visualise as Satan, Hell, and eternal torture, the Cross comes to deliver you from them. Satan is vanquished in the Cross, Hell is abolished, eternal torture becomes eternal life.

If the thought of to-day expresses the soul's inward unrest in other terms, such terms for example as Ibsen employs in his realistic pictures of life, the horrors of heredity, the eccentricities of hypocrisy, of lust, of greed,—no one will question that the human facts in Ibsen are more realistic and more appalling than the old names of Satan, Hell and eternal torment,—the theology of the Cross comes as an equal deliverance from the evil so expressed, a deliverance from the torment of self, from the entail of heredity, from the tyranny of habit, from the pride, the lovelessness, the cynicism which light the fires of the earthly hell.

The theology of the Cross detaches itself from both Romanism and Protestantism as such. Once these systems were its instruments. But so far as they have ceased to be so, it sits in judgment on them, and dismisses them. The ecclesiastical strife is on the surface, and attracts attention for that reason. But there is an inward and spiritual struggle going on in the world, which it is harder to see and to depict; it is the triumph of the Cross, the process by which at all times Christ is subduing all things unto Himself.

The theology of the Cross finally is the key to the Bible. If from the Bible one were to remove Christ crucified the whole book, as a book of God, and a charter of salvation, would fall to pieces. The Cross gone, one might very readily relegate the Bible to the general library of the religious books of the world; there would be little reason to regret the refutation of

its facts, or the depreciation of its doctrines. Apart from the Cross, the Bible is not a very clear or coherent direction of life, nor is it a very consistent picture of God. But with the Cross as the final cause of the Bible, the whole literature assumes coherence, purpose, articulation, vitality. The New Testament is the historic record of Christ crucified, what He was, what He did, and how He saved the world. The Old Testament is the picture of the preparation for His coming and for His work. It assumes the character of a forecast, a prophecy, a typology. Its moral discipline, its legal ordinances, its ethical truths, and its ethical limitations, both what it achieved and what it failed to achieve, alike cast the reader on Christ and the Cross, the goal to which the whole book leads.

Thus it will be seen that so far from explaining the Atonement away, our business rather is to find in it the explanation of everything. It was well said by Rothe that the theology of regeneration is the regeneration of theology. The all-reconciling truth of religion, and of humanity, and of God, is the truth of the reconciliation of man and God through the Cross of Christ.

There are many who try to present Christianity without the Cross, and who believe that they can commend it to mankind, if only the offence of the Cross has ceased. They are suffering from a curious illusion. A Christianity without the Cross is not Christianity at all. It avoids, no doubt, the offence of the Cross, but it also misses the saving power. Such a Christianity can no doubt adapt itself to current philosophies, or to

popular standards of life and conduct; but it cannot correct the philosophies, improve the standards, or convert the souls of men.

The theology of the Cross is the New Theology, which waits in its extent and far-reaching consequences to be tried.

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS, LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

JAN 21 1909

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: April 2006

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